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SPIRIT SISTER | Down the Alley with Starr ✚ AMS | Don't mess with Arlen

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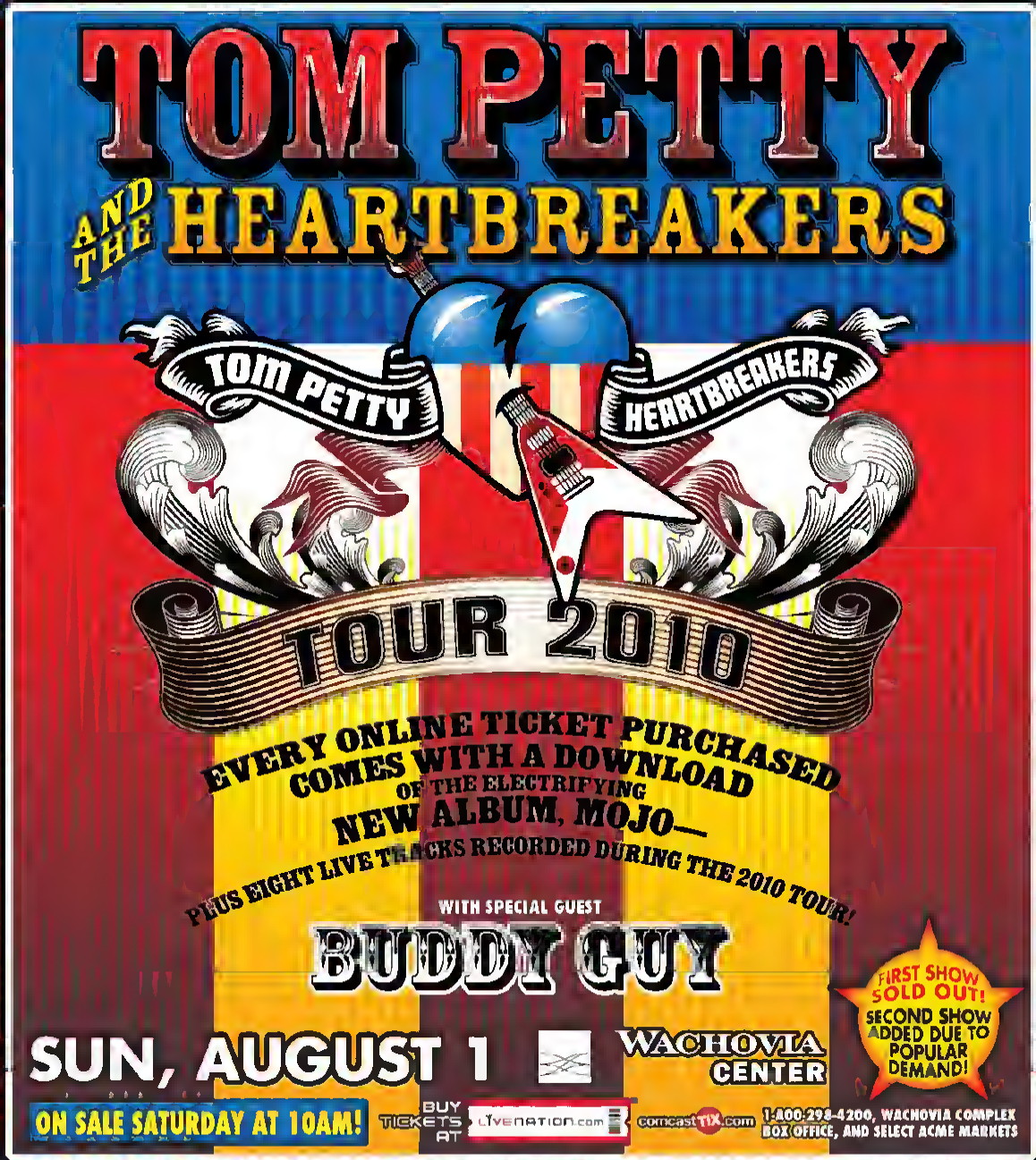
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ALTERNATIVE WEEKLY NETWORK AWN
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the naked city

thebellcurve

CP's Quality-o-Life-o-Meter

[+1] A bomb squad at the airport examines an unattended backpack but discovers only pornography inside. "To be fair," says bomb squad captain, "there is something fairly explosive at around minute 17 of *The Squirt Locker*."

[+2] Phillies slugger Ryan Howard signs a $125 million contract extension that could last until he's 37 years old. Explains Ruben Amaro Jr.: "We want to keep this exciting core in place long enough to get old and terrible together."

[+1] One teen who kicked another in the head during a flash mob apologized in court, saying her "thoughtless and reckless behaviors affected not only me, but society." "Actually, it's pretty funny from a safe distance," Society responds. "Do it again so we can film it."

[0] Three men dressed as Nazis get beaten up outside a punk show in Old City. And the creatures nearby looked from punk to Nazi, and from Nazi to punk, but it was impossible to say which was which.

[-2] A SEPTA regional rail conductor is injured by a low-speed train near a switch in Glenside. "I've heard about these new-fangled 'auto-mated switch-es,'" says SEPTA tycoon Cornelius VanGillicutty, "but I just don't trust no ro-bits. It's like I've always said, if you want a track switched right, you put the train in idle, get out and switch it your dang self."

[3] The city bulldozes 7,000 counterfeit watches confiscated last year. Hey spazzes. They were real watches.

[+4] In town performing a play, actress Kathleen Turner complains to Mayor Nutter about Philly cab drivers not using hands-free devices. "Oh, is that what she was trying to say?" asks Nutter. "That famous sex-smoky voice? Yeah, it's dropped down to like Jabba the Hutt levels. I mean, Jesus Christ. I was like, 'Who is this crazy lady burping at me?'"

[+2] Shepard Fairey comes to town to put up wheat-paste murals in the area. Aw look, Banksy has a posse.

This week's total: 5 | Last week's total: -9

EVAN M. LOPEZ

AMILLIONSTORIES

Now with Ben Franklin looking over our shoulder

So, what lesson have we learned this week? You do not fuck with **Arlen Specter**, because Arlen Specter does not fuck around. Even at 80, Snarlin' Arlen is perfectly willing to swat a fly with a bulldozer, and if he has to lift a page from **Karl Rove's playbook** to get what he wants — that would be re-election — so be it. What else did we learn? His primary opponent, **U.S. Rep. Joe Sestak** — a former Navy three-star admiral who acts, in the strange words of strange **MSNBC forehead Chris Matthews**, a bit too much like a "St. Francis" for Pennsylvania voters (*cough* pussy *cough*) — could use a little primer in the art of punching back.

What fun. Let's review, shall we?

A month ahead of their May 18 primary, Democratic Senate candidates Specter and Sestak went on the air with their respective ads. Sestak, a decidedly *meh* introduction to a voting base that has no idea who he is, Specter, a knee-capper almanac **Sestak's Navy career** and congressional attendance record, replete with that **creepy voiceover** that exists only to tell you that Joe Sestak is a very bad man. Team Sestak took umbrage at Specter's attack on the congressman's Navy record (not so much the part about his congressional attendance, because who cares) and pointed out that Specter went negative just as an April 12 Rasmussen poll showed the primary race was a **dead heat**.

Specter's ad — which has been condemned by none other than **Republican Senate candidate Pat Toomey** — aimed to stake the heart of Sestak's biography by claiming that the 31-year vet was "relieved of duty" for creating a "**poor command climate**."

Here are the facts. In July 2005, **Adm. Mike Mullen** (now chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) was sworn in as the chief of naval operations and immediately sacked Sestak as deputy chief of naval operations for warfare requirements and programs and reassigned him to "**lower-profile desk jobs**," as a 2005 *Navy Times* story put it. In January 2006, after his 6-year-old daughter was diagnosed with brain cancer, Sestak left the service, he ran for Congress the following November.

> Arlen Specter does not fuck around.

Specter's ad relies on that *Navy Times* piece, which alleges that Mullen removed Sestak — a Naval Academy grad with a master's in public administration and a doctorate in political economics, both from Harvard, who was the first director of the Navy's in-house think tank, called "Deep Blue" — not because he was intellectually unfit, but **because he was an asshole**.

Per the story: "Pentagon sources said Sestak was known to keep appointments waiting outside his office at length and pile excessive

>>> continued on adjacent page

[is creating a poor command climate]

A MILLION STORIES

amounts of work on his subordinates, keeping them deskbound at all hours. One described a verbally abusive leadership style."

It's here that the words "**poor command climate**" first appear, unattributed.

Responds Team Sestak: Sestak's job as deputy chief was to "**review the plans of those who outranked him** and come up with alternatives. When Mullen came on, he brought on his own team. The congressman moved to another position. No one has ever said anything to besmirch his record on the record," says a campaign source, off the record. In an interview, Sestak says his role was to "**change the Navy** to a smaller, more effective Navy by moving money into intelligence. There were those in the Rumsfeld [Department of Defense] that didn't like it."

Sestak struck back — if you want to call it that — with a letter signed by Navy comrades who called him a "sailor of the highest caliber, a leader of tremendous character and an officer of uncommon compassion." His former superior officer **Adm. Vern Clark**, told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on April 11, "He challenged people who did not want to be challenged. The guy is courageous, a **patriot's patriot**." Then, on April 22, Sestak released a public letter asking **Vice President Joe Biden**, who visited Scranton the next day to raise money for Specter, to disavow Specter's ad.

EVAN M. LOPEZ

Yawn. At the risk of playing favorites — this column is rigid in its **fairness and balance** — more bare-knuckle tactics are required here, congressman. If Specter is slinging mud while you're just getting your name out there, crying "**Swift Boat**" ain't gonna cut it. You gotta fight fire with fire. Example: "If Arlen Specter had his way, **Sarah Palin would be vice president.**"

See what your **creepy voiceover guy** can do with that.

The question is whether Sestak will, in the race's home stretch, mount the requisite **all-out assault** on Specter's 30 years as a Republican senator who **backed the Iraq war**, cleared Clarence Thomas' ascension to the Supreme Court and still to this day supports Steve Forbes' **wet dream of a flat tax**?

It seems Sestak is finally getting the point. (Better late than never.) In our 15-minute interview, Sestak used the word "**confused**" to describe Specter a good dozen times, as in, "You're confused, **very confused**, this is not the Republican Party you gave a **half-century** to."

Translation: "Arlen Specter is **old and senile** and belongs in a home." Now *that's* hardball. Pass the popcorn.

> GOOD WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT

There's a sucker born every minute, and **Michael Badnarik** knows it. On Sunday, he was able to persuade **17 such suckers** to pay $100 to hear him give a high school civics lesson about the Constitution — titled "**Introduction to the Constitution**" — peppered with **morsels of Glenn Beck** (chalkboard included!), in a dreary Drexel University classroom. For nine hours, Badnarik, leveraging his credentials as the **2004 Libertarian Party presidential candidate** and his self-conferred degree of constitutional scholarship, wasted about the Constitution, how great it is, what it is, and how Barack Obama is planning on introducing an amendment to use it as **personal toilet paper.**

Lunch was served. It cost $100.

By the time we rolled out of bed and made way to University City — 2 p.m., **don't judge us** — the class was five hours in, but Badnarik was just arriving at the basics: what an article is, what a section is, how many articles, how many sections, etc. (In the 10 minutes it took him to explain this, **Badnarik made about $32** discussing things that are available on Wikipedia for free. Just saying.)

For a minute, we felt duped. We were promised right-wing populism, manifestos on states' rights and at the very least, one comparison of **Obama to Hitler**. But the lecture lost its prosaicness as Badnarik — in front of a chalkboard half-filled with constitutional chronology and half-filled with **geometry questions** from an earlier Drexel class — launched into injunctions of Philly as the cradle of **liberty and Tea Partydom**.

"You've got to feel the power!" he implored. "You're here in Philadelphia! I mean, can't you feel **Benjamin Franklin looking over your shoulder**, saying go for it!"

Um, yeah. Other points of interest: "General welfare" does not apply to **food stamps or leeches** who use resources while, Badnarik says, "I'm **working my butt off**, and someone's watching TV, eating Bon Bons and making babies. Not on my watch!" Also: The state legislature is designed to prevent things like Obamacare from encroaching on our rights to **not see a doctor**.

Also: life, liberty and property! $100.

+ This week's report by Jeffrey C. Billman and Andrew Thompson. E-mail us at amillionstories@citypaper.net

man overboard!

By Isaiah Thompson

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

RIDDLE ME THIS: Where in America can someone be tried for a crime for which he's already been acquitted? The Philadelphia Parking Authority court, that's where!

Last week, Ron Blount, president of the Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania — a union of Philadelphia taxi drivers — stood before a judge to face charges (for the second time) of assaulting a passenger when she tried to pay with a credit card in March 2008. Last October, the Court of Common Pleas acquitted Blount of assault charges; the jury's deliberations took all of 25 minutes. But the PPA — which oversees cabs — pursued its administrative case against him anyway. In its own court, administered by its own judges, whose salary it pays.

And citing this case, the PPA's Taxi and Limousine Division (TLD) has refused to meet with Blount for the last two years.

It's a strange place, this TLD court. Drivers, who often face such high up-front fees that they have to work 11-hour days to earn a profit, are subject to high fines for rule violations. These fines are doled out by TLD officials, but drivers have the option of appealing to the PPA court. There, says attorney Mark Kirby, who frequently represents cabbies, the rules get weird. The court, for instance, charges cabbies $125 to appeal a fine. If they win, they get back $100. "Oops, they were wrong, but they'll keep your 25 bucks anyway. Thanks for coming."

The rules governing evidence are creative, as well. There is, for instance, no right to confront your accuser. In one case, a client of Kirby's was charged with refusing to take a credit card — a charge the driver said was the result of a misunderstanding. The accuser didn't show up, so the PPA submitted a written letter on her behalf. The judge ruled against the cabbie, citing the letter as "plausible and convincing."

"How do you cross-examine a document?" Kirby asks. "Is that a hearing, or is it a sham? Why have these hearings in the first place?"

Despite all that, on April 22, Blount was acquitted again, this time in PPA court. The judge called him one of the more credible witnesses he had seen. Does that mean the TLD will meet with him? Sure, TLD director Jim Ney told the *Metro*, "but that's not going to happen until we see the actual opinion."

When will that be? Only the PPA court knows for sure.

+ Isaiah Thompson always confronts his accuser. Accuse him at isaiah.thompson@citypaper.net.

HIS FATHER'S SON: Anthony Williams, whose trailblazing father passed away earlier this year, is pictured here in his Chinatown headquarters. He has, in the words of one observer, added "sizzle" and "exuberance" to a sometimes dull campaign.

NEAL SANTOS

{ candidates anonymous }

ODD MAN OUT

Can Anthony Williams become Pennsylvania's first black governor? By Holly Otterbein

➤ **EDITOR'S NOTE:** *This is the third in an occasional series on the little-known Democratic candidates for governor.*

In person, the first quirky thing about Anthony Williams you'll notice — a trait that television cameras and photographs often fail to capture — is a small, golden tuft of fuzz at the top of his gray, curly head of hair. The 53-year-old gubernatorial candidate and 11-year state senator for Philadelphia's Eighth District seems to be brimming with such idiosyncrasies. On Twitter, his use of exclamation points is promiscuous. ("Had an exciting week! Biz forum in Lehigh Valley!") During interviews, he high-fives reporters and makes casual jokes about pot. At gubernatorial forums, he's the odd man out.

"In these forums, all the other candidates will be nodding along, saying the same sorts of things," says Terry Madonna, a Pennsylvania politics scholar at Franklin and Marshall College (F&M). "But Williams isn't. He has personality. He's added a sizzle and exuberance to the race."

But will a series of quirks take Williams to the governor's mansion, despite the fact that he entered the race late (at the end of February)? And can he win as a black man in a state that even Gov. Ed Rendell has suggested is racist? If Williams thinks so, it's in part because of his father's legacy. Hardy Williams, who died a month before his son entered the gubernatorial race, was a mainstay in Philly politics. He co-founded the Black Political Forum in '67, and was the first viable black candidate to run for mayor. A *Daily News* obituary remarked (justifiably) that Hardy Williams had "helped pave the way" for black mayors W. Wilson Goode and John Street.

Asked if his father's death motivated him to run, Williams demurs. "I don't know. I didn't think about that," he says. "Something that did affect me was when I had to make that decision, I thought that he wouldn't hesitate because of fear of failure. He'd run for the positions and issues, for communities that often get overlooked."

One of Williams' pet issues is school choice. He strongly supports providing parents with taxpayer-financed vouchers to pay for their children's private school tuition and public funding for charter schools — a position at odds with the powerful teachers unions and the Democratic establishment. "People of color are particularly asking for these options," says Williams.

He's right. Throughout the country, school vouchers have made for strange bedfellows — particularly inner-city blacks and white evangelical Republicans. Critics contend that the government funding of private schools not only raises constitutional questions — namely, tax dollars going to religious institutions — but also undermines the state's public schools. (Williams founded and is still a board member of West Philly's Hardy Williams Charter School. According to tax records, he doesn't receive a salary from the school.)

Such voucher programs are rare in the United States, Williams admits, but despite a paucity of evidence, he doesn't doubt that they could succeed in Philly. "How are they going to fail?" he asks. "What fails when you have money to send your child to a public school? People are concerned about the system failing. What about being concerned about the child and parent failing?"

> "He should have been in a year ago."

This position has been a boon for his campaign finances. Of the remarkable $1.7 million Williams' April campaign finance report showed that he had received, almost $1.5 million came from PACs funded by three managing directors of Bala Cynwyd's Susquehanna International Group, an investment firm. Williams said the contributors, Joel Greenberg, Jeffrey Yass and Arthur Dantchik, agreed with his views on school choice, and that was that.

But a *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* article suggested otherwise. The article described the three as major stakeholders in casinos and gambling companies. (A subsequent correction clarifies that though Susquehanna International Group's holdings "include shares of gaming companies," neither "the investment firm nor any of its principals operates or controls any casino or other gaming company." Susquehanna International Group's directors did not return *City Paper*'s calls.)

Though Williams says he hasn't taken any direct contributions from gaming interests — he and competitors Dan Onorato, Jack Wagner and Joe Hoeffel have all received donations from the pro-casino Local 98 IBEW Committee on Political Education — Williams certainly positions himself in a way that could attract them. He supports legalizing and taxing Keno and small chance games in bars. He opposes repealing the extension of credit to slot machines because, he says, "poor people don't get that credit anyway."

Although, unlike Onorato, he doesn't have a city's economic revitalization to sell, Williams' campaign is similarly focused on job creation. The F&M economics major, class of 1979, believes that government funding for job training should be directed toward bioscience, pharmaceutical and technological industries. Williams has also touted his business achievements, like his role in bringing a new business corridor to Philadelphia's 60th Street, and co-founding Neighborhoods United Against Crime and Diversity Apprenticeship Program.

But some residents of the Eighth District, the community Williams represents in the State Senate, don't buy it. "After all the years he's been here, I don't see how our district has benefited from his leadership," says Tracey Gordon, president of the activist group Southwest Philly Concerned Citizens. "We have some of the highest rates of unemployment among African-Americans and youth here."

Still, Gordon, a black woman, does back Williams on at least one point. "I am an advocate of school choice," she says. "Parents should have the right to choose a school for their children."

But money aside, Williams' voucher support doesn't seem to be helping him with voters. An April 14 Susquehanna Polling and Research survey found Williams claiming just 4 percent of the vote, compared to 32 percent for front-runner Onorato. (Importantly, though, 43 percent considered themselves undecided.)

F&M's Madonna doesn't believe that race is Williams' biggest obstacle: "Obama carried the state by 10 points. I think voters would elect an African-American for governor. That doesn't mean I'm saying race isn't an issue at all, but racism is not Williams' problem," argues Madonna. "His problem is he should have been in this race a year ago."

But if this election doesn't work out, Williams has a backup plan. He'll also be on the May 18 primary ballot for his State Senate seat.

(holly.otterbein@citypaper.net)

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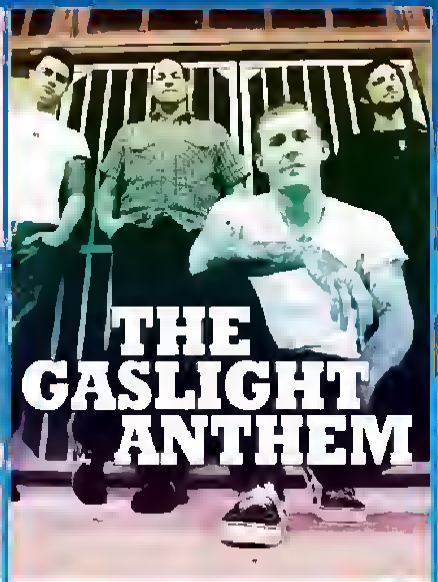

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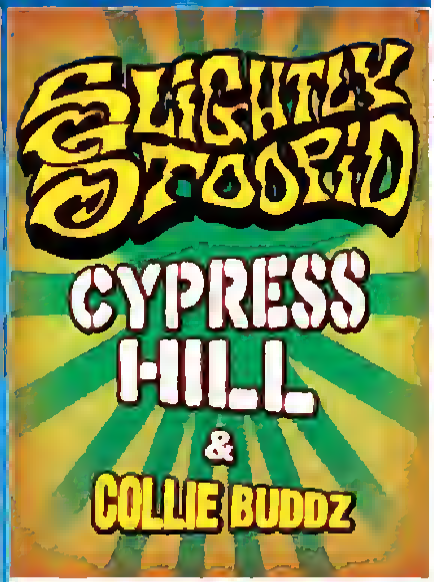

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RAZOR-WIRE OASIS

▸ **A PBS DOCUMENTARY** recently called Philly's Las Parcelas a Garden of Eden. After a recent lunch of pigeon pea and banana dumpling soup prepared in its outdoor kitchen, Garden of Eatin' seems an apt label, too. Under a broad fig tree, I slurp caramel flan as birds sing, wind chimes ring and a cock from a henhouse crows.

It's a little slice of heaven. Though as the bump-bump-bump of a pimped ride slides by, it seems more a heaven in hell's despite.

In Kensington's Norris Square neighborhood, Las Parcelas is the dream of Iris Brown, a little lady from Puerto Rico with a wave of white hair. She hands me homemade crackers to sop up more soup.

"We have no theater, no entertainment in this neighborhood," says Brown with a lilt. "So we have two kitchens here. We cook and cook and share the food with anyone who passes."

As she speaks, just outside the fence, a pit bull is pulling a trio of teenagers. Will *they* ever come in for a meal?

In 1987, the 5-foot-3 mom said "no" to drug dealers who'd turned this lot, the size of a block, into an open-air bazaar. With some 20 neighborhood women calling themselves Grupo Motivos, Brown tossed out the dealers, strung up barbed wire and locked the gate.

At the time, nobody knew who owned this block. Over the years, no one's come forward as the women planted gardens and put up fences in six more lots. Fringed with barbed wire, all are kept locked, except to trusted friends who know the code.

The kitchen garden is the most beautiful and vulnerable. Lush with veggies and flowers, it's ringed with rare medicinal herbs. Its various shacks are painted in eye-popping hues of yellow, green and blue — "the colors of family," says Brown. One shack has a tiny bedroom filled with antique toys, dolls and religious icons, evoking an idyllic life in rural 1940s Puerto Rico.

A heaven in hell's despite.

For more than 20 years, the Grupo Motivos women have successfully kept the creeps on the other side of the wire. But it's tiring, she says. This week, Brown had to have a little talk with one neighborhood teen. He'd been stashing drugs in Colobo, a Grupo Motivos park that's reminiscent of an African village garden.

At 63, Brown is now trying to bring in "young blood." Sadly, she's having little success. Her women's group has shrunk from 20 to 10, and most are late middle-aged.

"I want to share my passion for planting and cooking with young people," says Brown. "But they don't have a clue."

Ariel is Brown's granddaughter, and at 17, she's the youngest member of Grupo Motivos. But when I ask why her peers aren't coming in, she clams up.

"Is it the drug dealers?" I ask. She laughs nervously. "They aren't afraid, like they are of your grandmother?" More laughter, then a whispered "No, they're not."

Still, her grandmom remains stalwart. To entice a younger generation, she now has a children's garden and clubhouse for eight primary school kids that Ariel leads after school and over the summer.

And Brown still hopes to open her little heaven to everyone. "I hate the barbed wire," she says. "It would be wonderful to be able to take it down, so that everyone could enjoy, plant and respect the gardens.

"And little by little," she says, "I *am* taking the wire down."

(bruce@schimmel.com)

◆ *To view a Las Parcelas slideshow, visit citypaper.net/loosecanon*

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

feedback
From our readers

LOSERS ALL AROUND

DROP is probably, on balance, a loser, but on balance, so is your article (Cover Story, "The Billion Dollar Boondoggle," Ralph Cipriano, April 22). The city doesn't lose the money that is paid to people who stay at work while their pension accumulates because if they left, someone would replace them at a similar salary. Indeed, if they leave early, we save their higher salary in exchange for the lower salary paid by someone with less experience. The person you vilify the most, Council President Anna Verna, would, if she retired, most definitely be replaced by another council president earning the same salary. One way or another, a salary will be paid.

And you only note in passing that everyone in DROP has their ultimate pension payment frozen at the level it's at when they enter DROP. So four years of work credit is canceled along with four years of salary increases that would normally go into the pension calculation. These folks get DROP but they're also get lower pensions for the rest of their lives.

Yes, the value of the pension fund has gone down, but that's mainly due to the robber barons on Wall Street, not DROP, and those greedy city workers. Many of these workers may have saved a little only to see those savings get pillaged at the other end. So almost everyone has been screwed, including the taxpayers, but you've got the wrong villain.

Stan J. Shapiro
VIA CITYPAPER.NET

ACTUAL FEAR

I am a Tea Party sympathizer from the Philly suburbs. I grew up in San Francisco reading alternative weeklies, so I fully expected what I read to reflect the urban and liberal viewpoint on the whole Tea Party movement (Soapboxer, "Liberty Herself," Jeffrey C. Billman, April 15). However, I was very pleased to read your intelligent thoughts on what the Tea Party movement is all about. You dispelled the caricatures in favor of an honest analysis, and I appreciate that.

I would tell you, though, that it isn't cultural change (or President Obama's black heritage) I fear. What concerns me and prompted my involvement in politics is that both Republicans and Democratic spend way beyond our means. One other thought. The Tea Party isn't really about creating a viable third party. From my perspective, we went to pressure our elected representatives to rein in spending. Republicans at least nominally claim to represent this perspective, which is why I support them.

Gordon Kushner
CHADDS FORD

◆ *Send all letters to* **Feedback**, *City Paper, 123 Chestnut St., 3rd Floor, Phila., PA 19106; fax us at 215-599-0634; or e-mail editorial@citypaper.net. Submissions may be edited for clarity and space and must include an address and daytime phone number.*

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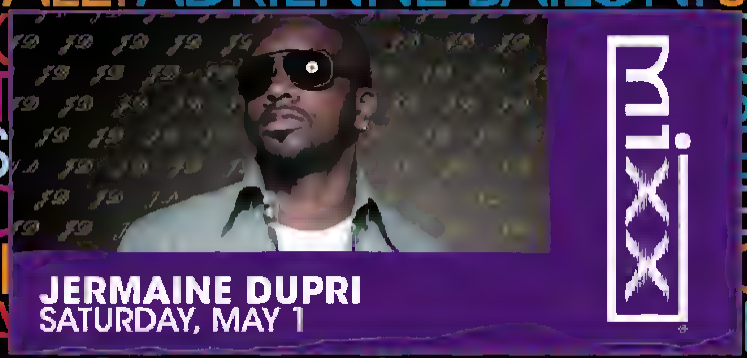

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BY ISAIAH THOMPSON | ILLUSTRATION BY ALYSSA GRENNING

AGRICULTURAL PHENOMENON

What happens when idealists, entrepreneurs and bureaucrats all latch onto the same trend?

A few weeks ago, at a community meeting in North Philadelphia, I witnessed a scene that seemed somehow symbolic, prophetic, even. The meeting — an energized rally by the Eastern North Philadelphia Coalition, a group trying to acquire vacant land for a neighborhood-managed land trust — had just ended, and community members were filing out.

At the door was a young, bearded white guy, passing out seeds.

"Free seeds!" he shouted jubilantly. "Take them home, plant them, have better food, save money!"

It seemed to embody in a single moment all the hope, passion — and, frankly, dubiousness — of the urban agriculture movement that is sweeping Philadelphia.

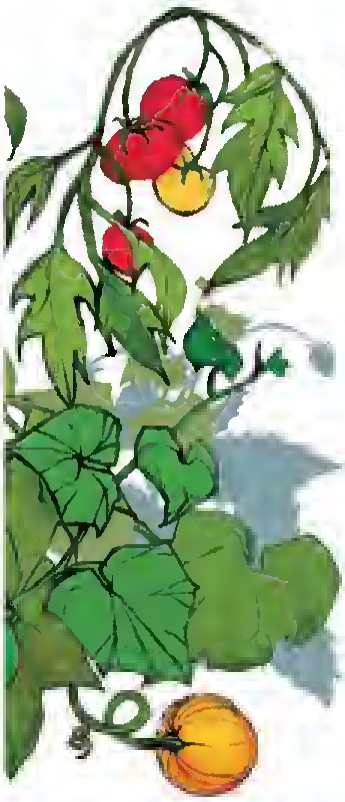
There's nothing radical about the idea of raising edible crops in the city. It's been done for ages. And Philadelphia, it cannot be denied, has plenty of land — including thousands of vacant lots.

What is a little more dubious is the sheer distance between what urban agriculture's most idealistic proponents want it to mean to Philadelphia — a self-sufficient means of food production for the poor, a source of jobs, a cure for the ills of urban obesity and malnutrition — and its reality on the ground so far.

Whether that distance can be breached may be put to the test soon. In recent years, urban agriculture has had the luxury of defining itself in opposition, to a culture of cheap, pesticide-dependent produce, to a society increasingly isolated from and ignorant of the origin of its food, and to a city which has sometimes seen vegetable gardens on vacant lots as impeding development — rather than vice versa.

But about a year ago, something surprising happened. The city itself began to get all *urban aggy*, with various city agencies coming up with proposals to sponsor new inner-city farms. Urban agriculture, all of a sudden, is in. The problem: quickly becoming apparent, is that no one quite agrees on what, exactly, it's supposed to be.

■ **IF THE IDEA** of Philadelphia — half-blighted, post-industrial, faded-glory Philly — as an urban gardening mecca seems wildly optimistic, it's worth noting that, not long ago, it was already well on its way. The 1970s marked a heyday of Philadelphia urban farming. As industrial jobs left and vacant lots sprang up around the city, urban gardens took off — tilled largely by Southern-born black and immigrant



communities, many of whom had grown up raising vegetables. They had support, too. The Philadelphia Horticultural Society's "Philadelphia Green" program helped prospective farmers get access to land. Penn State's newly formed Urban Gardening program made Philadelphia a centerpiece of a six-city pilot program later adopted and funded by the USDA.

These gardens, according to research by University of Pennsylvania planning professor Domenic Vitiello, thrived into the 1990s. In 1994, he notes in a 2008 report, Penn State's program knew of 501 area gardens maintained by an estimated 2,800 families that produced nearly $2 million worth of fruits and vegetables.

But within the span of 10 years, many vanished. In 1996, the USDA cut funding for urban gardening. Penn State and the Horticultural Society began to redirect their efforts away from urban agriculture. Gardeners themselves got older or passed away. And — good news to many — property values began to rise. Some gardens were replaced with development, others, according to Vitiello's research team, were quietly shut down by city officials.

Many are still alive and kicking — and the nonprofit Neighborhood Gardens Association has made its mission the preservation of these places by placing them in its land trust.

"At this point we have 30 gardens," says executive director Terry Mushovic, "and about 96 percent of that is food production."

Some of the biggest and most active gardens, she says, are powered by immigrants from Southeast Asia and Latin America. "They are growing massively," she says. "It's no hobby."

But there's no question such gardens have declined overall. Of the 600-odd former program-supported garden sites surveyed by Vitiello's team, 255 were inactive, and more than half of those are new vacant lots.

To Vitiello and many others, the story's moral is clear: With support from Philadelphia institutions, and from the city itself, urban agriculture in Philadelphia can thrive again — it just needs a hand up, and maybe a handout, too.

And if Vitiello has become the academic voice of that argument in Philadelphia, a new wave of urban ag enthusiasts — mostly young, white and educated — have become its arms and legs, lobbying the city to hand over what they see as the missing piece of the puzzle. "The biggest road block people like us have is access to land," says Matt McFarland, who owns a burgeoning half acre urban farm with his wife, Amanda, in Germantown. "It's not really viable for us to be buying land in competition with regular development."

IN 1994, 501 AREA GARDENS YIELDED NEARLY $2 MILLION IN PRODUCE

UNTIL RECENTLY, THE city hadn't shown much interest in handing over land for gardening. But the aggies are dangling a new carrot before the city. They want to make urban agriculture a business, they want to make money doing this.

It seems to be this new orientation that finally caught the city's interest. Giving away developable land for private gardening is one thing, but supporting "green business," maybe even creating "green jobs"? Hello, Zeitgeist!

The city Redevelopment Authority (RDA) was the first agency to reach for the torch, announcing last year it would be issuing a Request for Proposal to do commercial greenhouse gardening on a long-vacant parcel it held. A few months later, Mayor Michael Nutter announced his ambitious Greenworks Philadelphia plan that was supposed to make Philadelphia "the greenest city in America." Among its many goals: establishing 12 new urban farms and 15 new farmers markets by 2015.

But not long after the RDA's request for proposals was issued, it was withdrawn, and the RDA bucked off abruptly.

Terry Gillen, RDA's executive director, characterizes the misstep as a simple need for more time, more planning, more research. "What we found is it was way more complicated than we thought," says Gillen. "We realized there was a lot we didn't know, and we wanted to go back to the drawing board."

But urban aggers counter that the RDA was dipping its toes where it feared to swim, blaming an institutional nervousness when it comes to giving up control of any land.

"[Gillen] really wanted to develop an interim land-usage program — and it's an open debate as to whether you can build something and operate something in the three- to five-year period the RDA wanted to lease the land for," points out Mary Seton Corboy, co-founder of Greensgrow Farm, which was itself built 13 years ago on RDA-leased land, and represents one of the only economically successful urban "farms" in the city.

"Gillen saw it as a way the RDA could get land off its hands but still manage long-term control over it," Corboy explains. "Other people said, that's ridiculous, you need to give someone a minimum of 10 years."

The next city agency to give urban agriculture a shot is the Department of Parks and Recreation, which has unveiled a plan to lease out park land in the Manatawna Farms area — much easier to farm than vacant lots and brownfields — for for-profit commercial farming. The department has issued a Request for Information, to be followed by a Request for Proposal, to lease out 10 half-acre plots to willing farmers at a nominal price.

"What we're hoping to demonstrate is you don't need large parcels of land, that this is a viable economic process," says Environment, Stewardship and Education director Joan Blaustein. This idea has met with a warmer reception from urban ag gurus.

"Farming is generally a business and it has to be treated like a business," says Greensgrow's Corboy, "and when you don't treat it as a business, it fails."

Roxanne Christensen, co-founder of Somerton Tanks Farm, a now-finished demonstration project which also used public land to create a for-profit urban farm, agrees. She says the distinction between profitable and nonprofit farming is everything. "It's a distinction I harp on, and that I think is important," says Christensen. "It's the only way urban agriculture is going to be established on any scale."

But the profitable end of urban gardening has so far catered largely to the recent, and decidedly upper-end, market for higher-priced local food — which puts a few holes in the sails of those who tout it as a solution to the needs of poor city residents.

The nonprofit Mill Creek Farm, for example, serves a largely educational function for low-income neighbors, according to co-director Jade Walker (although they do donate to the local food bank). She sees the city's best role as preserving existing community farms, rather than actively pursuing new ones.

"I'd like to say it's not a separate issue," admits Christensen, referring to the lofty goals of inner-city low-income food access and nutrition, "but how urban agriculture can address that, when farmers have to make a living, I don't know. I think we'll see how — maybe that sounds like a cop-out, but I really think so.

"See if there's any interest in people becoming farmers in those low-income areas," she adds. "They'll figure out how to serve their markets."

(isaiah thompson@citypaper.net)

BY BRENDAN SKWIRE | ILLUSTRATION BY ALYSSA GRENNING

DEFUSING A STINK BOMB

How one very foul-smelling bug could ruin your garden this year

I've lived in the Kingsessing neighborhood of Southwest Philly for more than a decade. Over the past four years, I've been steadily building my backyard garden, beginning with a few in-ground plots and progressing to the series of raised beds I have now. Every year I learn more, especially when I make a mistake. I mean, who could've predicted that without a trellis, my spaghetti squash would take over most of the yard, climbing all over the deck and completely enveloping the fence that separates my neighbor's yard from mine?

Most of my amateur errors didn't have serious ramifications—my neighbor enjoyed all the squash that grew on her side of the fence. But last year I learned a big lesson about the brown marmorated stink bug, a nasty little pest that invaded Pennsylvania just over a decade ago, and whose numbers have been growing (and eating) exponentially ever since. They hit Philly in force in 2009 and ate about a third of my crops. It took me six months of searching on the Internet and calling the agriculture extensions of local universities to determine what the bug even was. What I learned wasn't pretty. This pest is ravenous. What's worse, there are no specific natural or chemical pesticides that will do it in, and you can't rely on natural predators to control them, either.

Like most bugs, the brown marmorated (that's entomologist speak for "marbled") stink bug, or BMSB, goes through a number of stages before it becomes an adult. These immature stages are called instars, and in its first, the little bastard looks an awful lot like a ladybug. Which explains why I was caught completely off guard by the holocaust that hit my veggies. I'd happily let the red-and-black baby bugs clustering on my broccoli and Brussels sprouts alone, figuring they were warding off beetles and aphids. The truth was much more insidious. Those little invaders were sucking the crops dry, leaving a swath of destruction in their wake that would make William Tecumseh Sherman blush. When they turned on my cabbages, it was too late: I had an infestation.

I found a photo of the bug on the Internet and posted it on my Facebook. The response was immediate: "I HAVE THOSE!" a friend in Fishtown wrote. "THEY KILL EVERYTHING, WHAT CAN I DO?"

The unfortunate answer not much. I got in touch with George Hamilton from the Department of Entomology at Rutgers University's Agriculture Extension, which has done a lot of research on the stink bug (fun fact: They get their name because when you smoosh 'em, they stink like rotten cheese or burning rubber). According to Hamilton, the BMSB's first appeared in Allentown in 1996, one of many unintended consequences of globalization. They hitched a ride from China and began reproducing in local farms almost immediately. They lay their eggs from June through September on a weekly basis, and the babies hatch just a few days later.

"Depending on where you are, their populations have slowly built to large levels," says Hamilton. "They're a huge problem in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, parts of Delaware and Maryland and even West Virginia. They'll feed on tomatoes, peppers, peaches, pears, apples, depending on time of year. Stink bugs also eat butterfly bush and asparagus."

Perhaps the main reason the bugs are difficult to get rid of is that they left their natural predators back in Asia. And while there are some critters native to the United States that eat the brown marmorated stinker—including predatory stink bugs, assassin bugs and two types of egg parasites—most of them eat a wide variety of insects, so they're not all that useful as a control.

Where the BMSB is concerned, there's no defense like a good offense. Rutgers lists several insecticides that may be effective against Mr. Stinky, but Hamilton warns, "You have to be cautious about the crops you want to treat." Rutgers provides a pared down list of products, but advises you read the labels. Furthermore, many are meant for indoor use. When I ask about pyrethrins, natural insecticides produced by certain species of chrysanthemum, Hamilton tells me that the research hasn't been completed. "You could plant daisies, which produce pyrethrum, but the bugs would have to feed on it," he says, and he just doesn't know if they do. "We haven't tested natural pyrethrum, but the pesticides we test are based on that substance, so it would make sense that natural pyrethrum might have an effect on them." Hormone traps, like those used to control Japanese beetles, don't exist for the stink bugs yet. "One specific problem is the stink bug isn't attracted to those traps as instars, but only as adults.

"You might try spraying your crops with neem oil," suggests Hamilton of the concentrated oil from a species of evergreen native to India that is known to kill a number of pests by preventing them from feeding and breeding. Hamilton adds that your best bet is probably hitting your crops with a stiff spray from the hose to knock off the bugs. I've used this method, and find it works fairly well, albeit temporarily (the bugs, they always come back). I've also experimented with making my own natural pesticide from Dawn dishwashing detergent, a little white vinegar and water, rejoicing as the bugs rolled over and died within a few seconds of spraying them. You can find a number of recipes online, but if you make it too strong, you'll kill your plants worse than the stink bugs will.

I wish I could tell you there was some kind of panacea to help rid your raised beds of brown stink bugs. But the most you can do is keep your eyes open for signs of an invasion, and act quickly to limit the damage. Learn what the egg clusters look like, and remove them if you can. Kill the bugs on sight. Get row covers. WHYY's Mike McGrath (see p. 18) has a list of strategies, and I highly recommend his archives at gardensalive.com. Like so many invasive agricultural pests, the brown marmorated stink bug isn't going anywhere soon. If last year is any hint of what's to come this summer, arm yourself. Now.

"THEY KILL EVERYTHING! WHAT CAN I DO?"

→ Brendan Skwire blogs at brendanonthe.com.

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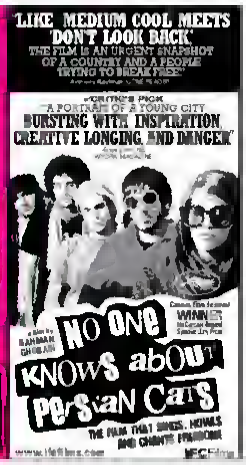

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IN THEATRES MAY 7

BY ISAIAH THOMPSON | ILLUSTRATION BY ALYSSA GRENNING

WORMS OF ENDEARMENT

In which our writer atones for his crimes against invertebrates

Steel your heart, gentle reader. While full of joy, this story begins in tragedy.

It all began last spring, when I decided I wanted to have a "garden." I had no land, no yard, no community garden plot, no fire escape — not even a window ledge. But I had an office, with a window. And outside the window was a roof. And so I planted a haphazard rooftop "garden" — a series of plastic buckets and discarded Gatorade bottles filled with potting soil and housing a half-dozen tomato plants which teetered constantly on the brink of death.

The tomatoes deserved compost, I thought, and the compost deserved worms to eat it. So I showed up at a friend's one balmy Sunday, grabbed a shovel, and began stuffing into a giant sack shovelfuls of wormy muck from a year-old pile of rotting food in his backyard.

Getting it all back to the "garden" by bicycle — some 50 or 60 pounds, at least — was another matter entirely. The heavy sack teetered on my rear rack, and in order to make the 5-mile ride without losing it, I had to strap it down as tightly as possible. I recall, as I winched it down, seeing a single worm wriggle its way through a tiny rip in the bag, escaping to the ground. "Your loss," I told it.

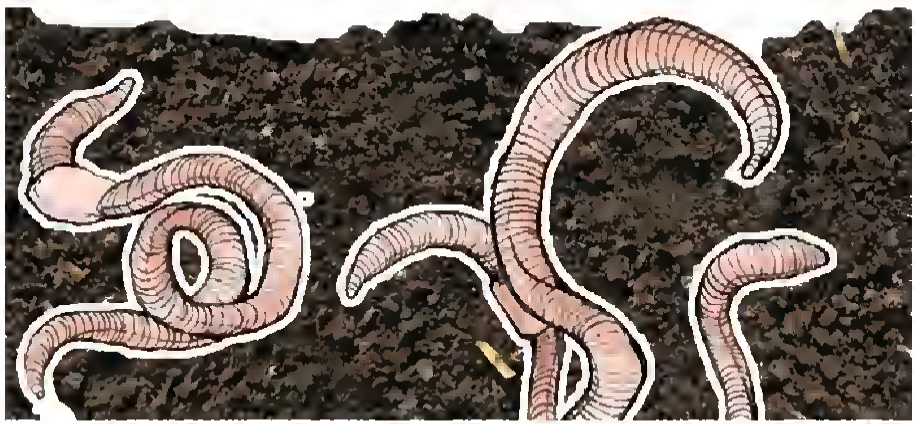
An hour later I had unpacked the bag and dumped its contents into a plastic tub. The worms were dead, all of them. They had been crushed, it seems — compacted to death on the ride over.

I sought atonement the only way I knew how: I went outside, dug up some worms and built for them a kingdom.

There are two ways to start a worm bin. One is to research the process, buy a starter population of the right kind of worms — *Eisenia foetida*, or "red wigglers," especially suited to eating food waste — and carefully construct a worm-friendly habitat.

The other way is to do what I did. Ignore all information, stick a random bunch of worms in a plastic Tupperware tub, add some coffee grounds, and see what happens.

What happened, in my case, was slightly amazing. The worms homogenized. No sooner did I transfer my little colony to a larger bin than the fast-moving nightcrawler I'd seen hanging around vanished. The fat, grayish worms were gone, too. Instead, a single species of had taken over — thin and pinkish, with a band of yellow at one end.



I WENT OUTSIDE, DUG UP SOME WORMS AND BUILT FOR THEM A KINGDOM

Eisenia foetida, an online species identification guide confirmed — red wigglers.

Nature itself had selected the right worm for my bin. If that isn't a sign of forgiveness, what is?

The joy of raising worms is not, I would argue, the mere utility of having dinner scraps converted to free plant fertilizer. No. It's the joy of discovery, of scientific exploration.

The worm is a mysterious beast, its ways endlessly puzzling, unfathomable. They like, for instance, to congregate — you can find them by listening to variations in the soft crunch they make below the surface.

In 2004, Indian researchers reported not a single instance of mortality in 15 weeks among worms living in pure cow, buffalo, horse, donkey, sheep, goat and camel dung. Spanish scientists found out worms can regulate the size — yet not the quantity — of their cocoons.

But these are rubber dinghies of knowledge in the great sea of the unknown. When I feed my worms coffee, do they get jittery? Did that nightcrawler die of natural causes?

Mysteries, all.

The worm bin, in short, is Mars. Mysterious fungi grow beneath pale plants that sprout in the dark, tiny, ghostly white mites feast on the dead. A molding glob of Chinese turnip pudding turned fetid in two days — yet was gone in seven.

Not long ago, I decided to tax the worms with a new challenge. I emptied out everything but the worms, and added back in 6 or so pounds of spent beer grains, to see how long it would take for that amber grain to become black soil.

Within 24 hours, the grains began to rot, and a pungent, sour stink wafted from the vents. Then the mixture began to get noticeably warm — then hot.

"It's going to blow," I thought. "I'm going to kill them all — again."

For days, it kept up — the stench worsening and the heat rising, until the plastic walls were warm to the touch from outside. But, slowly, the bin began to cool. The smell subsided. A few days ago, I popped the lid to check. The blond grains had turned to rich black clumps, and the bin was as full of worms as I'd ever seen it. They seemed — for worms, of course — happy.

(isaiah thompson@citypaper.net)

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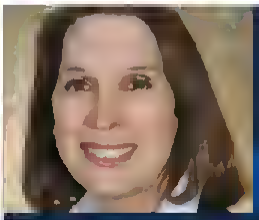

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INTERVIEW BY BRIAN HOWARD | PHOTO BY WALTER O'BRIEN

GROW YOUR OWN WAY

Dirty talk and seedy advice from radio gardening guru Mike McGrath

"You people in Philly are the luckiest people in the world," explodes Mike McGrath, the gregarious host of WHYY-FM's green-thumbed weekend staple "You Bet Your Garden" (Saturdays at 11 a.m. on 90.9 FM). McGrath, a Torresdale native/Temple alum/former entertainment editor of this paper's spiritual forbear *The Drummer*, says the city's a veritable urban gardening hotbed. With its preponderance of community gardens Philly is "like Starbucks, you've got one on every corner. Even if half of them close, you still got one on every corner." After a lively game of phone tag, we caught up with the Zionsville-based McGrath and nicked him for some tips for newbie gardeners.

***City Paper*: What would you say to someone who didn't realize until, like, today that they wanted to give this gardening thing a go?**

Mike McGrath: They're good. Totally good. May 15 is like the typical date that cowards put out their tomatoes and peppers and stuff. The first year I actually insist that everyone buy everything already started at a garden center, 'cause you should get used to killing big plants outdoors before you try to kill little tiny ones in your house.

I am having that experience.

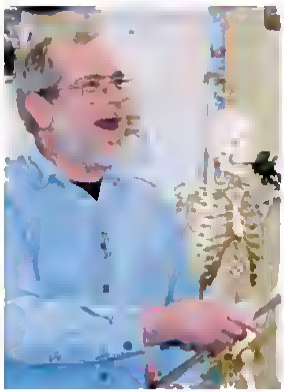
Different skills, they are totally different skills. Seed starting and outdoor gardening have nothing in common.

What's the difference?

Outdoor gardening you have the sun helping you, you have the rain helping you, your soil's pitiful but the roots can go where they want if they want to try to save themselves. Indoors the poor plants are in some impossibly rude structure with lousy dirt and us, who aren't giving them enough light, who're giving them too much water, and, you know, the Red Cross comes and bangs on first-time seed starters' doors, they bring blankets and chocolate and a number of lawyers for the plants. It's pitiful. Outdoors the plants have a chance to fend for themselves, especially if you neglect them outdoors. Plants like that.

Talk to me about soil. What do you need?

Three things you need to grow a great garden: compost, compost and compost. Compost made from shredded fall leaves that no longer looks like the leaves and looks like rich black soil grew essentially every plant on the Earth, and it's all your plants need. And 2 inches on top of the soil will feed your plans, prevent weeds, keep moisture in the soil. It's just as good as that tragic "triple premium" shredded bark that's actually chipped-up pallets from China, spray-painted some god-awful color.



So May 15 is the date?

That's kinda D Day. It's like the last average frost date, for a region that includes Philly, but in truth Philly is a hot spot in more ways than one because of all the impervious surfaces, the big stone buildings, all the paved streets, it retains an enormous amount of heat in the summer ... but that means you guys can also plant earlier if you want. I say May 15 because you can plant on May 15 and you won't lose anything. You get the entire season. You can probably go on May 1 if you have good-quality plants and the Weather Channel says go ahead, and you feel lucky.

What should rookies be looking for in starter plants?

Look for short and stocky, the opposite of people. Tall and lanky looks good on a human — it's bad on a plant. It means it was starved for light.

That's what's called leggy, right?

Correct. Which is certainly what you look for in a good-looking woman — that's a good thing. You look at a plant, it's laggy — 100 percent bad thing.

Let's say you started your seeds in peat pots inside ...

Did they get any artificial light?

They got no artificial light. They got put next to a window.

How pitiful were they when you put them out? Kind a hoping a neighborhood vermin would come and chew them down and it wouldn't be your fault? I'd say there's only one direction they could've gone, it sounds like. Do they look any better?

No.

[Laughs loudly for a long time.] This is why gardening is fun. You go to a party with your socialist, liberal, gun-confiscating, tax-and-spend friends. And you start talking about how you grew these plants perfectly and you're getting these delicious tomatoes. People start walking away from you. It's disgusting. It's like bragging about your children. You tell them about these olympic failures where you killed these plants at every level possible. You were like the Eagles. You found new ways to lose at every turn. And it's a great story! And you will have learned more from the year of the Eagles than you would learn if the 2008 Phillies were your first year of gardening.

(bhoward@citypaper.net)

+Mike McGrath will give a free talk on growing tomatoes Wed., May 5, 7-9 p.m., at William Penn Charter School, 3000 W. School House Lane, 215 844-3460, penncharter.com. For more advice from McGrath, visit whyy.org/garden. To read an extended version of this interview, including McGrath's merciless dressing down of the author for his pathetic gardening techniques, visit citypaper.net/coverstory.

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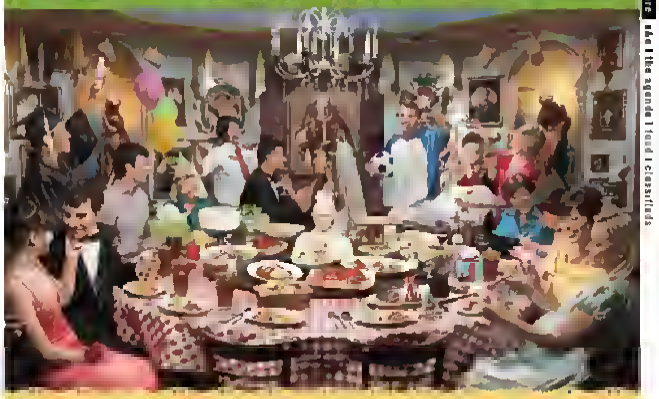

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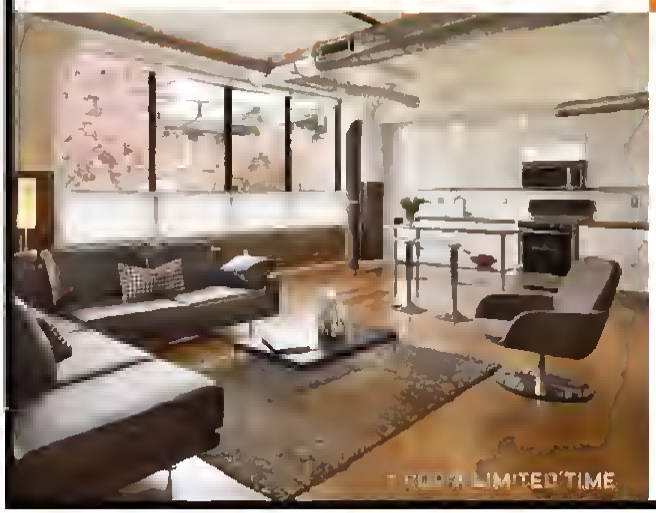

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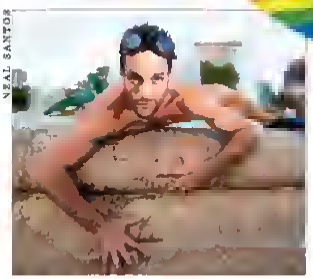
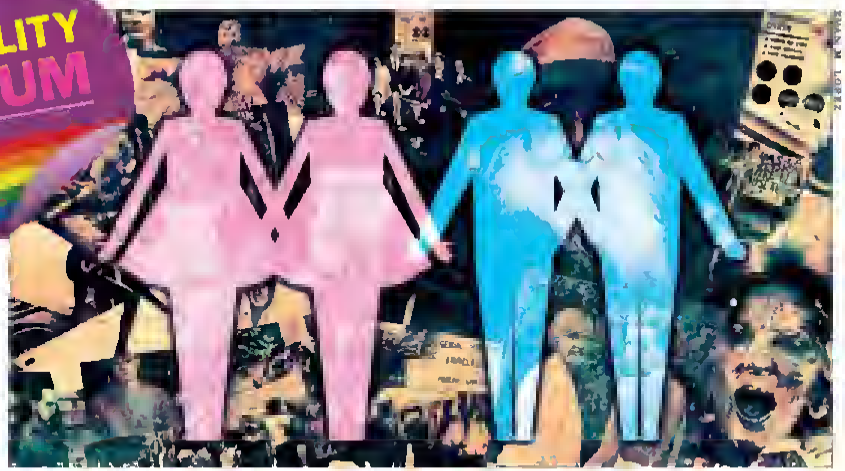


NEAL SANTOS



[dance tribute]

LIFE OF BRIAN

➤ **ARTISTS OFTEN HAVE** to wait till they're old and frail — or 6 feet under — before being honored for their body of work. Equality Forum's executive director, Malcolm Lazin, would rather give working artists the praise they deserve while they're at their best. Hence the Forum's tribute to 43-year-old dancer/choreographer Brian Sanders, whose finely honed body — and body of work — is still quite intact.

"We feel Brian is a national treasure," says Lazin of the dancemaker who continues to craft inventive pieces that are equal parts edgy and accessible. "He is one of the premier American choreographers. What we admire most about him is that he is ready and able to stretch the envelope. As many times as you see his work, his next work is always unexpected."

When it comes to his craft, the choreographer is nothing if not serious. For this tribute, Sanders spent time working with students from the University of the Arts, where he's an assistant professor. The tribute's program also features works by other UArts instructors, including Roni Koresh, Christine Cox and Zane Booker.

So is Sanders excited by all the attention and the honor? "I'm a choreographer at heart, and that's what I think about," he responds. "If there's any glamour behind it, well, I'm just here sweating it out."

—Deni Kasrel

✦Brian Sanders Dance Tribute, Fri., April 30, 7 p.m. $5. $100 Merriam Theater, 250 S. Broad St., 215 732-3378. equalityforum.com.

[the movement is us]

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

The gay rights movement, from the Mattachine Society to now

By Jeffrey C. Billman

It's sometimes easy to forget, amid what seem the herculean battles of today waged on the chaotic clusterfuck of 24-hour cable news networks, how far, and how quickly, the gay civil rights movement has come. It was just 60 years ago, in the aftermath of World War II, that the first American gay rights organization — or rather, the first one that mattered — formed. And even then, the Mattachine Society began the slow, dogged push for equality largely in the shadows.

The era of out-and-proud queers was a ways off.

Those were turbulent days for sexual minorities. Gays were so hated that even the ACLU wouldn't rally to their cause. The Communist Party, Enemy No. 1 at the height of the Red Scare, did not want to be sullied by having homosexuals in their midst. A Truman administration document asserted that gays posed a greater risk to national security than the reds. Gays were (until 1980, in fact) denied jobs in the federal government, state licensing boards commonly held similar strictures. According to one estimate, gays and lesbians throughout the Cold War were legally barred from at least 20 percent of the nation's jobs. The news media — whose job it is to "comfort the afflicted" — piled on, gleefully reporting the names of men rounded up in police raids on gay bars.

In those days, the words "gay marriage" weren't on anyone's lips. Civil unions? Unheard of. Anti-employment discrimination laws? Gay clergy? Open military service? Out gay politicians (or, perhaps, allegations that a politician faked his gayness to gain votes)? Pipe dreams, all. Members of the Mattachine Society and other such pioneers fought laws that made their very being illegal. They fought entrenched hatred and scorn at the risk of their livelihoods, and in a very real sense, their lives.

This was all before the Stonewall riots. This was before Harvey Milk. This was before the movement crystallized around the AIDS epidemic; before the American Psychiatric Association decided that homosexuality was no longer a pathological condition in 1973; before Don't Ask, Don't Tell, before *Will & Grace* and the mainstreaming of gay culture; before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws in 2003, before Massachusetts and (briefly) San Francisco began issuing gay marriage licenses in 2004.

As gays and lesbians and their supporters descend on this city for this week's Equality Forum, we would do well to keep men like Harry Hay, Bob Hull, Rudi Gernreich, Chuck Rowland and Dale Jennings — the Mattachine founders — in mind. But obviously, their work is not done. Although gays and lesbians have undeniably made incredible strides, the fight for true equality persists. Gays have access to full marriage equality in only six states and Washington, D.C. They cannot serve openly in the military (a fact that has led Lt. Daniel Choi, a discharged gay vet, to chain himself twice to the White House fence in recent weeks in protest). In much of Pennsylvania, they can legally be denied housing and employment based solely on their sexual orientation.

For all their gains, gays and lesbians remain, by any objective measure, second-class citizens. And that's the point of this year's Equality Forum: to not only honor those, like Choi, and like Ted Olson and David Boies — the sparring attorneys in the Bush v. Gore election dispute who collaboratively challenged California's anti-gay marriage Proposition 8 — who have taken up the Mattachine banner (Olson and Boies will be awarded the Forum's International Role Model Award at the May 1 International Equality Dinner at the National Constitution Center, which Choi will also attend), but to remember that every cause worth fighting for needs a new generation of heroes, and the movement for gay civil rights will be no different.

(jeffrey billman@citypaper.net)

✦Check out our picks for the Equality Forum's panel discussions at citypaper.net/clog.

OUTINGS

CP's list of can't-miss parties/brunches/exhibits to hit up at this year's Equality Forum **By Josh Middleton**

11th Annual Girl Fever *Sat., May 1, 8:30 p.m., $10* ➤ Arrive prepared to shake your lady parts to the beats of DJ Steve Singer and last year's Battle of the DJs winner DJ Kash. Sisters General Manager Denise Cohen says after 11 years, this les-tastic soiree is one of the top fundraisers for the Equality Forum. If you have what it takes to be Philly's reigning famous dyke, bring your game to the first-ever Celesbian contest. Cohen says a $1,000 prize package will go to the woman able to rally the largest display of crowd approval through talent or flat-out sex appeal. *Sisters, 1320 Chancellor St., 215-735-0735, sistersnightclub.com.*

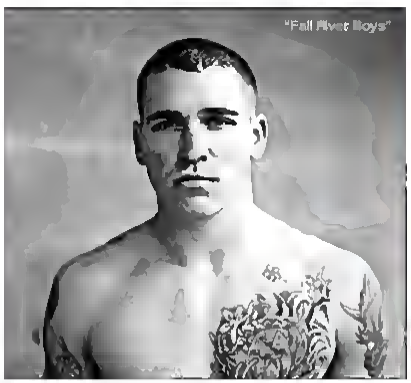
SundayOUT! Drag Brunch *Sun., May 2, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.* ➤ Honey, you haven't been served brunch till it's brought to you on a platter by a drag queen. Darling's General Manager Dan Contarino solicited two handfuls of she-man to serve, host and whip out a ditty or two. And because we all know we can't depend on a diva to wait on us hand and foot, Contarino says a slew of hot-bodied men-men will be in attendance to make sure everything runs smooth and delicious-like. A temporary liquor license has been garnered to supplement the regular brunch fare menu, so drink up and tip generously unless you want one of those bitches to mix a little 'tude into your huevos rancheros. *Darling's, 1033 N. Second St., 267-239-5775, darlingsdiner.com.*

SundayOUT! @ the Piazza *Sun., May 2, noon-7 p.m., $5-$10* ➤ After a full week of festivities, Equality Forum climaxes with a SundayOUT bash that Executive Director Malcolm Lazin calls the largest in Philadelphia pride history. This year they're housing the party in a grander venue than Independence Mall. The Piazza allows room for two street festivals and enough merriment to rival Wigstock. The street fairs will be packed with more than 100 vendors. You can pick up a few gay films at the TLA booth, ogle the Velvet Lily's sex toys or rummage through a selection of local-made crafts provided by Rainbow Alternative. When you're in the mood to get your grub on, promenade along the five blocks at Liberties Walk, where restaurants like A Full Plate Café, Home Slice Pizzeria and the Candy Shoppe will dish out specially priced treats all day long. Another first this year is the six hours of live entertainment scheduled on the main stage under the Piazza's Jumbotron. Look out for a concert by Philadelphia Freedom Band, a performance by dance choreographer Zane Booker and a musical number from *Rent*'s Anthony Rapp accompanied by the Philadelphia Gay Men's Chorus. The final hour of the evening will be dominated by clubby pop-tartlets Kristine Elezaj and Samantha Marq and Swedish idol Agnes. Lazin describes the last as a toned-down Lady Gaga, so be prepared to get your boogie on. *The Piazza and Liberties Walk, N. Second St. and Germantown Ave., atthepiazza.com.*

Same-Sex Commitment Ceremony *Sun., May 2, 2:30-2:45 p.m., free* ➤ SundayOUT isn't all fun and games. Messages promoting gay empowerment will be sprinkled throughout the day. One of the most compelling of these messages is a commitment ceremony drawing attention to the 1,138 federal marital and protection benefits denied to same-sex couples. Nearly 100 gay twosomes have signed up to take part in the event that will be officiated by three interfaith clergy representing a variety of spiritual backgrounds. Lazin says the couples participating have been together anywhere from a short period of time to more than 40 years. "It's a statement to bring attention to the fact that by virtue of being prohibited from marrying," says Lazin, "we're denied what others take for granted." *The Piazza.*

Richard Renaldi: "Fall River Boys" *Through May 30* ➤ Richard Renaldi wasn't attracted to Fall River, Mass., because of the men who lived there. At first. The photographer would travel through the working-class town while on his way to vacation in Cape Cod, but stopped to check out the old industrial buildings. Soon he became fascinated with the idea of male coming-of-age in a town that "had seen its payday a long time ago," according to Renaldi. "I decided to go photograph them one day," he says about his subject. "It just organically evolved into something much bigger and much deeper." *Sol Mednick Gallery, 211 S. Broad St., 215 717 6300, uarts.edu.*

(joshua.middleton@citypaper.net)



FAMILY AFFAIR

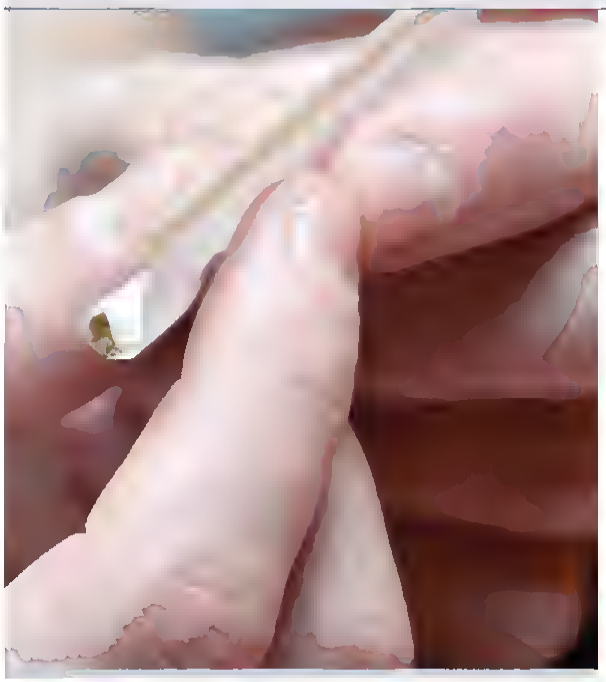
➤ *PREACHER'S SONS*

The Stewarts are exactly like any other American family, unless you consider that they've defied every societal convention known to man. This insightful documentary chronicles the journey of the Rev. Greg Stewart and his husband, Stillman, as they cart their five black and Latino foster children from the West Coast to middle America and back again in search of a community that will embrace their colorful presence. Along the way, racial and homosexual prejudice rear their busted heads to cast an isolated shadow over the family, but their optimism coupled with hilarious footage of their hectic home life keep the film from being bogged down with too much gloom. Stay-at-home "mom" Stillman provides most of the film's comic relief through his attempts to turn everything into a joke. The camera follows him as he works to keep the kids in check with a list of chores and frequent time-out sessions. "Whoever invented Xanax," he jokes, "it was the best thing." But through all the giggles, the message of equality rings loud and clear. Seeing developmental progress in these troubled children's lives provides proof that the benefit of patience and stability can stem from a loving family, regardless of its sexual composition. —*Josh Middleton (Fri., April 30, 7:30 p.m., $5, Arts Bank, 601 S. Broad St., uarts.edu.)*

➤ *OUT IN THE SILENCE*

When Joe Wilson got married, he did the natural thing: He sent a wedding announcement to his hometown paper, *The Derrick* in Oil City, Pa. But Wilson was marrying his partner, Dean Hamer, and the item on the man-to-man nuptials caused a torrent of letters decrying their union. Wilson received a letter from a mother saying that her openly gay son, CJ, was so harassed at school with no protection from teachers that he had to seek alternative forms of education. So Wilson and Hamer traveled from their home in D.C. to Oil City to explore homophobia and growing up out in a small town. Their main challenge is battling the bile spewed by the local branch of the American Family Association, headed up by the taciturn, to-dish Diane Gramley. While the changes Wilson and co. effect are vague, CJ is a bizarrely charming subject and Wilson is a warm narrator who came out after he left Oil City and had not yet experienced its injustices. —*Molly Eichel (Sat., May 1, 7:30 p.m., $5, Arts Bank)*

healthy PHILADELPHIA



LEGALIZING MEDICAL MARIJUANA:

ARE WE CROSSING THE LINE?

Everybody has a readily spoken opinion on medical marijuana, but now more then ever it seems like medical marijuana is one thing most of us agree upon. In an ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted in January of this year, 81 percent of Americans said that doctors should be allowed to prescribe marijuana for medical purposes to treat their patients. If the days of "Reefer Madness" are behind us, can nationwide legalization of medical marijuana be far behind? It depends on whom you ask. In the meantime, we're going to take a look at the pros and cons and where the laws stand today.

The Laws

Starting with California in 1996 and, most recently, New Jersey in 2010, 14 states have legalized medical marijuana. Each state's law varies in terms of how much an ID card costs, how much usable marijuana you can possess, how many plants you can possess for home cultivation, and whether or not the state accepts ID cards from other states.

The New Jersey law allows for possession of up to 2 ounces of medical marijuana but does not allow for home cultivation. What about Pennsylvania and Delaware you ask? A bill introduced to the Delaware Senate in June 2009 would allow patients to possess up to 6 ounces and to cultivate up to 12 plants for medical use. In December 2009, testimony for and against an act providing for the medical use of marijuana was held in the Health and Human Services Committee of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. But as of now, it's all still up in the air.

To complicate matters, state laws aren't the whole story. According to federal law, marijuana is not medicine and in Gonzales v. Raich (2005), the United States Supreme Court held that the federal government has the authority to prohibit marijuana for all purposes. That means federal law enforcement officials may prosecute medical marijuana patients, even if they grow their own medicine and even if they reside in a state where medical marijuana is protected under state law.

The Cons

Marijuana is classified as a Schedule 1 drug by the 1970 Controlled Substances Act, meaning it is considered to have a "high potential for abuse," "no currently accepted medical use," and "a lack of accepted safety." It also just happens to be the most commonly abused illicit drug in the United States. In a 2007 survey, 14.4 million Americans aged 12 or older reported using marijuana at least once in the month prior to being surveyed.

According to DrugAbuse.gov, smoking marijuana can cause "distorted perceptions, impaired coordination, difficulty in thinking and problem solving, and problems with learning and memory."

In addition, marijuana smoke contains "50–70 percent more carcinogenic hydrocarbons than tobacco smoke." The British Lung Foundation reports that 3–4 marijuana cigarettes a day are as dangerous to the lungs as 20 or more tobacco cigarettes a day.

Another argument from opponents is the "gateway" effect. The argument goes like this: more access to marijuana among the medically ill will lead to more access to marijuana among young people. Several reports indicate that the younger children are when they first use marijuana the more likely they will be to use cocaine and heroin as adults.

One of the biggest arguments against medical marijuana is that there are less dangerous medicines offering the same relief currently available on the market.

The Pros

Proponents, including prominent physicians like former US Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders, argue that marijuana is a safe and effective treatment for pain, nausea, and vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, migraines, glaucoma, and epilepsy. Because marijuana is smoked the effects are felt within minutes, which is ideal for treatment.

To combat the "gateway" argument, proponents point out that in 8 out of 10 states that had legalized medical marijuana by 2006 saw a decrease in teen use of marijuana from 1999 to 2006.

Arguments about lung disease and respiratory problems can be countered by a UCLA study presented in May 2006 that found no association between marijuana and lung cancer. It went so far as to suggest that marijuana may even have "some protective effect."

What about the dangers? Between 1997 and 2005, marijuana was involved in 279 deaths whereas the total deaths from 17 FDA-approved drugs used to treat everything from muscle spasms to vomiting were 11,687.

What's next?

While states across the nation debate the pros and cons of medical marijuana, California (who legalized medical marijuana in 1996) is once again blazing trails when it comes to marijuana legislation. This November, voters will have a chance to weigh in on "The Regulate, Control and Tax Cannabis Act." Supporters plan on spending millions of dollars to convince Californians that legalizing marijuana will help balance the budget and reduce violent crime.

Other issues are coming to the forefront as medical marijuana gains a foothold across the nation. One such issue is reconciling employer drug testing policies with state laws regarding medical marijuana. In March of 2010, a Michigan man with sinus cancer and all the legal documentation required to possess medical marijuana, was fired from Walmart for failing a drug test. Health insurance is another topic of discussion. As of right now, medical marijuana is virtually uncovered by health insurance.

There's even an iPhone app that can help people looking for medical cannabis collectives, cooperatives, doctors, clinics, attorneys, organizations, and other patient services in states that have passed medical marijuana laws. Stay tuned.

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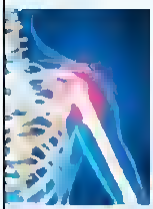

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STAYING POWER

GADI DAGON

▶ **IN THE LAST** two decades **Koresh Dance Co.** has built its foundations on sexually potent athleticism and animal grace. That brand of passionate gymnastics is the calling card of Israeli-born choreographer/artistic director Ronen Koresh, whose career is all about practicing what he preaches.

Certainly there is an Alvin Ailey air about his fluid but exacting movements and flirty, fast tempo execution. Add a bracing command of characterization and solid storytelling, and it makes sense that in 2006, KDC wound up at the Suzanne Roberts Theatre as its resident dance company.

"The Suzanne Roberts has been a blessing as it's given us a permanent home and the opportunity to have regular seasons we could plan ahead of time," says Koresh. "Audiences look forward to seeing us because our presence is constant." Having a home base has also made it easier to book guests like Itzik Galili, Robert Battle and Ohad Naharin.

Artistic director of Israel's critically acclaimed Batsheva Dance Co., Naharin will offer up his *Passomezzo* for KDC to premiere this weekend. "His is a unique and uncompromising voice," says Koresh of Naharin's work. "He is without a doubt at the forefront of expression in dance, and so I wanted my crew — and myself — to experience it first-hand. ... Ohad and I both seem to be on a personal journey."

Something else the choreographers have in common is music — both are known for their collaboration on the scores of their dances. Premiering his own new work along with Naharin's, Koresh gave his score (co-composed by Greg Smith, Kari Mullen and Nic Kindal) plenty of direction. "I had specific requirements that I wanted in the full-evening-length composition," says Koresh of his piece *Sense of Human*. "In every new work that I set out to create, I try to reinvent myself, create new vocabulary and explore places I haven't explored before."

—A.D. Amorosi

◆ *April 29-May 2, $20-$30, Suzanne Roberts Theatre, 480 S. Broad St., 215-985-0420, koreshdance.org*

GREAT SCOTT
Zachary Scott (right) stars as an alcoholic detective in search of his kidnapped son in the 1950 New York noir *Guilty Bystander*.

COURTESY OF JAY SCHWARTZ

{ movies }

BYSTANDER EFFECT

While Hollywood dominated the Golden Age, New York waited in the wings. By Shaun Brady

Every film history book tells the same story: American cinema was born in Thomas Edison's workshop and thrived on the East Coast until D.W. Griffith packed up the industry and headed west to make *The Birth of a Nation*. For the next several decades, the New York film industry laid dormant until the post-WWII collapse of Hollywood's Golden Age, when a series of landmark movies — from *On the Waterfront* to *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Godfather* to *Annie Hall* — suddenly heralded an Eastern renaissance beginning in the late '60s.

That story makes for a neat narrative — just right for Hollywood — but, according to film historian and Rutgers professor Richard Koszarski, the truth is, in true New York fashion, much more untidy. Koszarski calls the history of the NY film industry between the wars a "black hole," and in his book *Hollywood on the Hudson: Film and Television in New York from Griffith to Sarnoff*, newly released in paperback, he reveals himself as its Stephen Hawking.

"The book finds the answer to where something like *On the Waterfront* or *Midnight Cowboy* comes from," Koszarski says. "There was an unbroken filmmaking tradition in the city, but it had gone off the radar because it tended toward things like documentary film, ethnic and minority filmmaking, short movies, television production. Let's face it, if people ask for the 10 best movies, you're going to come up with 10 dramatic feature-length films. You're not going to throw in a short or a great newsreel or a Laurel and Hardy two-reeler. And if your notion of cinema is feature-length dramatic movies, that was the part of the industry that moved to Hollywood. There's nothing wrong with emphasizing that, but you're going to have a gap in your understanding of what the American cinema has been about."

In his exhaustive history, Koszarski posits that decades of continuing production *on the margins* of mainstream filmmaking kept studio buildings and trained technicians afloat, maintaining an infrastructure that was primed to resume producing feature films when the "Dream Factory" era crumbled. In the meantime, the metropolis kept busy churning out educational and industrial films, niche movies for black or Yiddish-speaking audiences, newsreels, animation and the occasional stab at independence — such as the four films made by screenwriters Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, undermined by their preference for playing backgammon rather than directing their actors.

> The truth is much more untidy.

Hollywood on the Hudson is the result of 30 years' worth of research and began as an oral history project during Koszarski's two-decade stint as head of collections and exhibitions at New York's Museum of the Moving Image. "I thought the story would draw a straight line connecting *The Great Train Robbery* with Spike Lee," he says. "I never got to those popular and accessible points because this black hole in the middle proved to be what was really important."

>>> continued on page 27

[elegantly mounted, graciously self-important]

[kaleidoscope]

➤ rock/pop

They sound more like Luna than Simple Minds, but I get this nagging nauseous nostalgia whenever I listen to Sweden's **Shout Out Louds**. (They play the Church on Monday, r5productions.com.) Just about everything on the recent *Work* (Merge) would a made a pretty montage in a John Hughes movie. The synths are vibrant, the vocals gentle, the lyrics poignant and heavy. Don't you forget about me

—Patrick Rapa

➤ finale

After a decade exhibiting gritty city photographs beneath the noise and hustle of the interstate, favorite daughter **Zoe Strauss** — Pew fellow, Whitney Biennial participant, published author — is calling Sunday her last **"Under I-95"** (1–4 p.m., Front and Mifflin streets, i-95-10.blogspot.com). The final show consists of 231 images spread out around two South Philly blocks, which will take serious perusers about an hour and a half to traverse. Photocopies of each deeply personal, raw shot of Philly residents and their environs are $5 a pop — a small price to pay for your own piece of the city

—Molly Eichel

➤ memoir

What's most striking about **Paul Guest**'s articulate, no-bullshit memoir, *One More Theory About Happiness* (Ecco, May 4), is how long the poet spends tracing the immediate aftermath of a life-altering childhood accident, mapping out memories of a youth spent immobile. At 12, Guest fell off a bike and broke his neck, two-thirds into the slim volume, he's just reached his college years, still navigating the unimaginable life of a quadriplegic. It's peculiar and remarkable, painful and uplifting; the one disappointment is how rushed the last third feels in comparison. If only lengthy autobiographies were back in style

—Carolyn Huckabay

➤ movies/web

Every field of study has its major introductory text. Just like all art history students own a Janson edition, all cinema studies students possess — and should worship at the altar of — a Bordwell. Film scholar David Bordwell has recently set his sights on the Internet, and his blog (**davidbordwell.net**) is an excellent source for long-form film criticism, without the academic pretenses that can bore even the hardest-core cinephile to Sirk-sized tears. With abundant pictures and no need for a deep understanding of film theory, Bordwell proves that film criticism is not at death's door, just yet.

—Molly Eichel

flickpick [movie review]

PRIVATE EYES Benjamín Esposito plays a man obsessed with a 25-year-old case in the Oscar-winning *The Secret in Their Eyes*

THE SECRET IN THEIR EYES

[C+] **WHEN NOT MAKING** films in his native Argentina, Juan José Campanella maintains a busy sideline helming TV shows like *House* and *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*. He combines those two worlds in *The Secret in Their Eyes*, which often feels like an overwrought L&O episode inflated to feature length with melodramatic flourishes and political pretensions. That it won this year's Oscar for Best Foreign Language film should come as no surprise, this is exactly the sort of elegantly mounted, graciously self-important thriller that the Academy loves. Sprawling over 25 years, the story centers on a 1974 rape and murder that has weighed on the mind of criminal court investigator Ricardo Darín (Benjamín Esposito) ever since. Deciding to tell the tale in novel form, he reconnects with an ex-boss and almost-lover (Soledad Villamil), seemingly hoping to rekindle their never-consummated romance as he finally lays the case to rest. Darín's dissatisfaction comes not from an unsolved mystery, but from justice unserved. Having promised the victim's husband that he would put the killer away, he is forced to watch as the psychopath is released due to political string-pulling and petty bureaucratic vengeance. Campanella employs the crime thriller to explore the ways in which one's obsessions can both fill and empty a life. But, perhaps too inured to the attention spans of viewers distracted by commercials, the director hammers those points repeatedly and relentlessly. Key lines — especially those about leading "lives full of nothing" — recur with the regularity of a song's chorus, and are emphasized like yellow highlighter, making an absurd climax nearly predictable. Feigning an air of sophisticated restraint, Campanella lunges at every opportunity for spectacle. Witness the acrobatics of the unbroken take that begins as an aerial view of a soccer stadium, swoops into a close-up, and then breaks into a hand-held chase scene, all without a single cut — it's *Notorious* plus *Touch of Evil*, but serves little purpose other than calling attention to itself. Even the secretive passions announced by the title are played with yearning stares about as repressed as close-ups in a telenovela. —*Shaun Brady*

hangthedj J. Edward Keyes on shuffle

THE HAPPENING

➤ **THERE ARE MYRIAD** reasons to cheer the arrival of a new **LCD Soundsystem** record, not the least of which is that each one affords us, once again, the opportunity to hear what James Murphy has been listening to. From virtually any other musician, this bent toward protracted quotations and historic reverence would seem cheap and unimaginative, but Murphy thankfully isn't a mimic so much as a synthesist. Each LCD song is the sound of seven other songs happening at once, and which influence you notice depends on where you're focusing your attention. He's the sonic equivalent of Jacques Tati's *Play Time*.

Judging by *This Is Happening* (which comes out May 18), the third great LCD Soundsystem record in a row, the albums occupying most of Murphy's time lately have been the ones David Bowie made in Berlin. You can practically sing the melody to "Heroes" over Murphy's "All I Want," so similar is its motorik chug and high-arcing guitar line. Irresistible lead single "Drunk Girls" has the same fist-in-the-air severity as "Boys Keep Swinging," and "Somebody's Calling Me" borrows the seasick throb of Iggy Pop's Bowie-produced "Nightclubbing" for its tale of romantic paralysis.

This would all be a bunch of record-geek workery, except that Murphy uses his predecessors only as springboards. By the time "All I Want" reaches its finale, it's been radically shapeshifted, synthesizers cascading down like a digital waterfall. It doesn't hurt that Murphy's an incredible smartass, one who laces his songs with countless underplayed punchlines. There's a left-field kiss-off to *Village Voice* gossip columnist Michael Musto in "Pow Pow Pow" (the chorus of which is "Pow! Pow Pow Pow Pow! Pow Pow Pow Pow!") and snide baiting of the biz in "You Wanted a Hit." As suncatcher-synths twinkle behind him, Murphy taunts, "Baby, we don't *do* hits."

That's where he's wrong, of course. It's simply that Murphy's hits are part of the same lineage as his heroes: Bowie, New Order, Brian Eno. They set the tempo — it's up to the rest of us to come around

(j_keyes@citypaper.net)

LCD Soundsystem *This Is Happening* (DFA/Virgin)

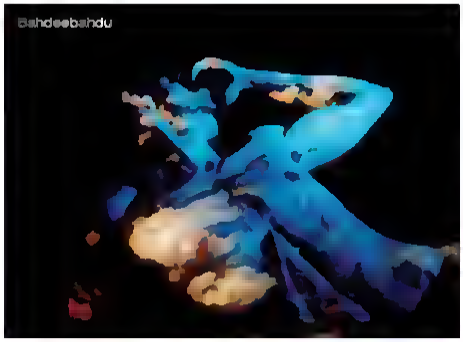
lastchance
Catch it or regret it

▸ STRATASPHERE

Colleen McCubbin Stepanic stood over a tree trunk that had been sawed in half. When it was whole, it looked like every other tree in the world. But its insides told a different story. The trunk contained two sets of concentric circles, meaning that it was likely two separate trees, which, over time, had become one. "You'll see two trees that grow together into one sometimes," says Stepanic, "but this tree was different, because nobody knew it was actually two different trees till they cut it down." This unlikely specimen became the inspiration for Stepanic's *Bound*, showing in StrataSphere's group exhibit "Spontaneous Repetition."

For the labor-intensive work, Stepanic painted pieces of fabric, cut them into long strips, sewed them together into two spiral shapes, and then repeated this whole process over again several times. At best, though, *Bound* looks marginally like a tree trunk. But who cares? The work's respectable method, along with its hints of domesticity and the natural world, give the viewer more than enough to admire. Stepanic's *Abundant*, made using a similar technique, brings a clearer, libidinous force to the show. This work is composed of dozens of tiny, circular slabs of fabric sewn together, which, whether you're a teenage boy or not, look exactly like round, pink breasts. "Everyone sees that," Stepanic says with a giggle.

Marie H. Elcin's embroidery, depicting homey Fishtown intersections, Penn Treaty Park and other local snapshots, fits in well with the exhibit's domestic tenor. But it isn't nearly as majestic or beautiful as Stepanic's body of work. Alongside *Abundant* and *Bound*, Elcin's needlework seem better suited for Etsy. But who cares? It'd make for pretty sweet home décor. *Ends May 1, 1854 Germantown Ave., 267-974-5060, thestratasphere.com.*



▸ BAHDEEBAHDU

Naked, resolved, callhypygian men are the focus of R. Lans Clark's "Luminous Encounters" show. Clark projected images of clouds, splattered paint and hand-drawn lines onto the models, and then photographed them. Though a few of the works — those with clouds, specifically — are glib, more often than not they're pretty, gender-bending and playful. The model, known to viewers only as "Stephen," a hithe man who's pictured in preposterous, catlike back bends and yoga poses, is an especially stunning subject. He will vividly remind you of how awe-inspiring the human body can be. *Ends May 3, 1522 N. American St., 215-627-5002, bahdeebahdu.com.*

▸ PAGEANT : SOLOVEEV

Nick Lenker's exhibit "The Destruction and Creation of Man" doesn't quite run the gamut that its title promises. But between a few sculptures, prints, installations and a short film viewed through a peephole, Lenker does tackle myth, religion, the occult, cults, fire, animals and evil, among other themes. Good enough. Though his prints aren't anything extraordinary, Lenker's sculptures and installations are mesmerizing. A pair of fur-hooded, paint-splattered capes, hung over so casually on the wall, are haunting. *Ascension*, which depicts a white clay man being roasted over a bed of hot coals, is simultaneously kitschy and horrifying. Kind of like the crucifix, but for sinister hippies. *Ends May 8, 607 Bainbridge St., 215-925-1535, pageantsoloveev.com.*

—Holly Otterbein
(holly.otterbein@citypaper.net)

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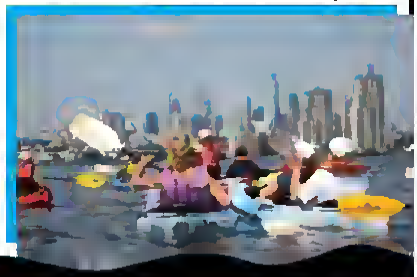


"This black hole in the middle proved to be what was important."

The site of the museum itself plays a key part in Koszarski's narrative. The building once housed Astoria Studio, built in 1920 and intended to supplement Paramount Pictures' Hollywood facilities.

"Paramount didn't get it," Koszarski shrugs. "They thought they could have what [Paramount co-founder] Jesse Lasky called 'a miniature Hollywood' in Astoria. Well, if you're talking about the film industry as a factory system, there's no such thing as a miniature factory. What you have then is a workshop, a boutique operation, and that's what survived in New York."

In a program sponsored by Secret Cinema, the author will present one example of that industry, the rarely seen 1950 noir *Guilty Bystander*, which follows an alcoholic detective (played by Zachary Scott) tracking down his kidnapped son. The film was made after the period covered by Koszarski's book but marks the transition to a new period, which he plans to cover in his follow-up volume.

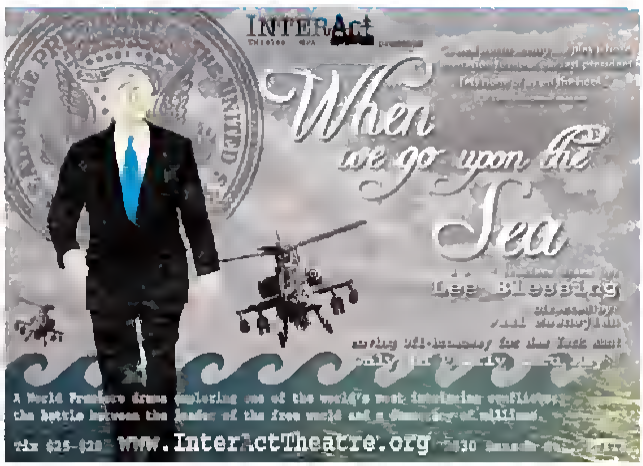
"*Guilty Bystander* in 1950 is pointing to the way movies [were] going to be made in the year 2000," Koszarski says. "Hollywood was making films in 1950 the way they were making films in 1920."

Though lacking in depictions of Manhattan icons — no Empire State Building or Times Square here — *Guilty Bystander* is full of what Koszarski calls "local identifiers," from the blacklisted cast and crew members to the gritty depiction of the city itself — and its subsequent obscurity.

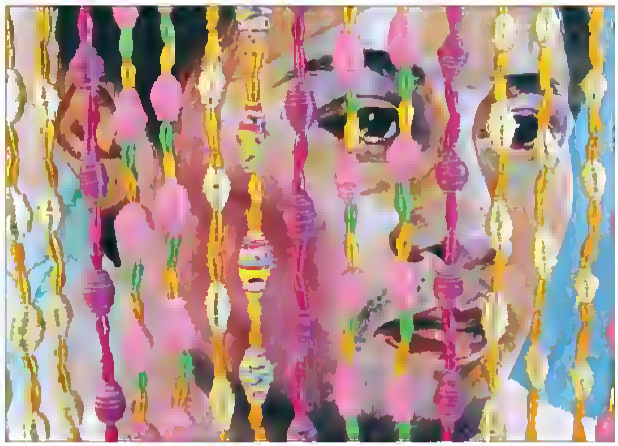
"It's made in New York, but you won't find a single picture-postcard view of the Manhattan skyline — it's all done in very rundown industrial sections of Manhattan and Brooklyn. He doesn't track wealthy criminals down to their fashionable apartments," says Koszarski. "This really is the underside, a physical manifestation of this completely dark, grubbier aspect of his own soul. Hollywood would have been too smart to do that."

(s_brady@citypaper.net)

Secret Cinema presents Hollywood on the Hudson, Fri., April 30, 8 p.m., $7, Moore College of Art & Design, 1916 Race St., 215-965-4099, thesecretcinema.com



➤ video art



+ LIVE CINEMA/HISTORIES IN MOTION

The notion of "history" tackled by the three animated films that will occupy the Art Museum's video gallery over the next few months ranges from the personal to the political to the social. Jennifer Levonian's *Take Your Picture With a Puma* (pictured) is a gorgeous watercolor dream, finding beauty in the gaudiest of culture clashes. Set in Mexico during the height of tourist season and based on Eric Rohmer's *Bakery Girl of Monceau*, two people obliquely connect against a backdrop of fast-food wrappers and Lonely Planet absurdities. Martha Colburn's *Join the Freedom Force* is a frenzied collage of protest, an orgy of angry signs, puppet heads and riot police. As he did in *dread*, Joshua Mosley imagines a conversation between two historical figures in *International*, this time assembling sound clips of economist Friedrich Hayek and builder/philanthropist George Brown against a James Benning-like succession of landscapes.

—Shaun Brady

April 30-July 25, $16, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2600 Ben Franklin Parkway, 215-763-6100, philamuseum.org

➤ dance

+ PENNSYLVANIA BALLET

ALEXANDRA WILLIAMS

Springtime for Pennsylvania Ballet means an eclectic, electric quartet of dances. *Square Dance*, created by George Balanchine in 1957, combines Vivaldi with the traditional folk dance — just the kind of juxtaposition Balanchine loved best. PAB recently acquired the rights to Jerome Robbins' *Afternoon of the Faun*. First performed by Vaslav Nijinsky in 1912's Ballet Russe, the dance has morphed from a solo to a duet in Robbins' capable hands. *Requiem for a Rose*, in which dancers perform as an elegant bouquet of red roses, was created by Netherlands choreographer Annabelle Lopez Ochoa and returns after premiering locally last season. Finally, Europa-based William Forsythe's incredibly experimental dance *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated* is a company premiere.

—Janet Anderson

May 5-9, $21.50-$126.50, Merriam Theater, 250 S. Broad St., 215-893-1999, paballet.org

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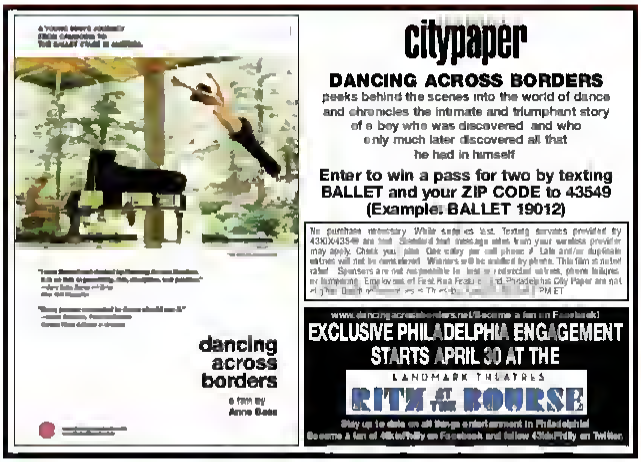


[music picks]

➤ rock/pop

+ FUTURE ISLANDS

For art-damaged neo-post-punkers, Baltimore's trio Future Islands comes on disarmingly friendly-like at first, all bounceable blankwave beats and twinkly electro-pop melodies. Things get a bit more perplexing when Samuel Herring opens his throat, unleashing an alarmingly histrionic, gravelly growl (think Man Man's Honus Honus or an even barmier Tom Waits), which manages to sound both Muppetish and menacing, but also, weirder yet, almost romantic.

—K. Ross Hoffman

Sun., May 2. 8 p.m. $5, $10 donation, with Double Dagger, Lower Dens and Buck Gooter. Danger Danger Gallery, 5013 Baltimore Ave. myspace.com/dangerdangergallery.

➤ folk/labor

+ ANNE FEENEY

Saturday's May Day, the worldwide labor movement's day of celebration. There's probably no better talent to comment on it than poli-folkie Anne Feeney, whose e-mail handle is "unionmaid" and whose business card reads, "hellraiser.""I've heard people say unions were important once, but that now they are irrelevant. I figure these people must be getting paid what they deserve, have a wonderful health plan that covers everything, a terrific and secure pension, a safe workplace where all employees are treated fairly," she says. "Those things have been the goal of unions for all these years — the stronger the movement, the likelier you are to get it."

—Mary Armstrong

Sat., May 1. 7:30 p.m. $10-$30, with Evan Greer and Roy Zimmerman. Crossroads Music, Calvary Church, 801 S. 45th St. 215-729-1028, crossroadsconcerts.org.

➤ jazz/world

+ VIJAY IYER'S TIRTHA

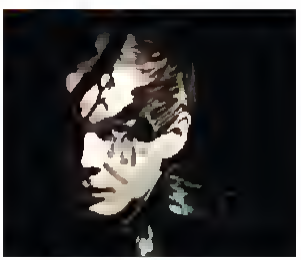
The description of this performance on the Grand Opera House's website pegs Vijay Iyer as a "South Asian pianist," despite the fact that he was born and raised in upstate New York. That confusion of identity has plagued Iyer and frequent collaborator Rudresh Mahanthappa throughout their careers, as both have explored their heritage in different but intertwining ways. Still, a decidedly modern approach to jazz is the natural leapmg-off point for their ventures into Indian music, not vice versa. Tirtha is Iyer's most explicit fusion of those two worlds, a trio with (actually South Indian) guitarist Prasanna and (ditto) tabla player Nitin Mitta.

—Shaun Brady

Fri., April 30. 8 p.m. $26. Grand Opera House, 818 N. Market St., Wilmington, Del. 302-652-5577, grandopera.org.

➤ art-pop

+ JÓNSI



Jón Þór Birgisson's surprisingly sprightly solo bow finds the angel-voiced Icelander on earthlier if no less fantastical footing than with Sigur Rós, scampering like a woodland pixie through capricious, Sufjanesque cadenzas of peepersish pipes darting among eruptive bursts of percussion and just generally switching up his music's go-to geo-sonic metaphor from glaciers to geysers.

—K. Ross Hoffman

Mon., May 3, 8 p.m. $30, with Death Vessel. Electric Factory, 421 N. Seventh St., 215-627-1332, electricfactory.info.

➤ irish

+ CEILI GROUP

Seeking high-energy music based in the Irish tradition, but happy to hear the boundaries stretched a bit? Three blazing young talents — Isaac Alderson, Gráinne Murphy, Alan Murray — handle that job with ease. Friday's steaming-hot concert may tempt you to polish your own licks. Lucky for you, these three will offer workshops in flute and whistle (Alderson), fiddle (Murphy) and guitar (Murray).

—Mary Armstrong

Fri., April 30. 8:30 p.m. $15, workshop Sat., May 1, noon. $25. Philadelphia Ceili Group at Irish Center, 6815 Emlen St. 267-205-1188, philadelphiaceiligroup.org.

THE RUNAWAY BUNNY

Frightened Rabbit
The Winter of Mixed Drinks
(FAT CAT)

If: England belongs to twee then Scotland belongs to emo. At least that's how I felt about Frightened Rabbit's earlier work — all grumpy, grandiloquent you-broke-us-up songs. (Their show at the Church on Friday is sold out, by the way.) Charming power-poppy, infectious but way too whiny. **Perhaps** That's what makes *The Winter of Mixed Drinks* so refreshing. Here the prevailing angst seems to be existential. "Dip the toe in the ocean/ Oh how it hardens and it numbs/ The rest of me is a version of man built to collapse into crumbs." **Topics include:** death, despair, materialism. **I mean:** Frontman Scott Hutchison's still way up his own arse, but he's really found some interesting things up there.

—Patrick Rapa

MR. TOAD'S WILD RIDE

Frog Eyes
Paul's Tomb: A Triumph
(DEAD OCEANS)

You know Carey Mercer as the least famous guy in Swan Lake (behind Destroyer/New Pornographer Dan Bejar and Wolf Parade/Sunset Rubdowner/former Frog Eye Spencer Krug). **The company** he keeps is telling. *Paul's Tomb: A Triumph* combines the unstructured histrionics of Krug's best work (see "Rebel Horns") with the sidelong sensibilities and yen for wandering cryptic storytelling that's the essence of Bejar's catalog (record opener "A Flower in a Glove" runs 9:08). **The only song** that qualities as catchy is the excellent "Lear in Love," which means you either buy into Frog Eyes' occasionally marble-mouthed panic epics or you don't.

—Brian Howard

SAME OLD SMUT

The New Pornographers
Together
(MATADOR)

Ask Yourself: Are The New Pornographers toying with you? **Sure, you marvel,** at how the careers of Carl Newman and Neko Case and Dan Bejar have skyrocketed this way and that, and yet they all continue to honor some blood-oath to convene every two or so years to record new collection of 12 insta-catchy hum-alongs. **And, OK:** Be it the grinding Newmanic opening riff of "Moves," the classic Case swells of the oh-so-timely "Crash Years" or the conspicuous Bejar idiosyncrasies of "Silver Jenny Dollar," *Together* delivers. **Though** At some point you will ask, "Is this starting to feel samey?" then you'll be distracted by a sick chord progression into a soaring string crescendo and you'll answer, talking to yourself, "Yes, but when did we start looking gift horses in the mouth?"

—Brian Howard

WIENERS AND LOSERS

Brian Posehn
Fart & Wiener Jokes
(RELAPSE)

I Know: With a title like that, we shouldn't hope for something clever or edgy. And Posehn opens the album with "Take off your thinkin' caps. I'm bout to make it fuckin' stupid in here." **Still:** I expected something a little more polished from the 6-foot-6 orange behemoth. His appearances in *Comedians of Comedy* and *The Sarah Silverman Show* might've hinted at deeper depths than spam and Wikipedia and "my iTunes thinks I'm gey." **But:** That's just me with my thinkin' cap on. For a dumb old comedy CD — one on a metal label, no less — this is pretty funny. **The bonus tracks:** Just in case name-checking Slayer and Dio in his act didn't prove his Relapse cred, Posehn ends the album with a heavy version of "The Gambler" and a once-will-do original, "More Metal Than You."

—Patrick Rapa

ONE TRACK MIND

➤ SLEIGH BELLS
"A/B Machines"

Talk about boom boom pow. This week's *Rolling Stone* features Will I am blathering about the hidden avant-garde qualities of his group's world-conquering one-note-wonder. "Fool, it's the most complex s—t you could even fathom." I doubt you'd catch Brooklyn duo Sleigh Bells — one former hardcore punker, one erstwhile girl-group pop tart — claiming anything of the sort about their own equally giddy bombastic racket, which is just as pea-brained, if a good deal more black-eyed. Beyond its bruising, preposterous levels of overdrive, "A/B Machines" actually has three notes (at least some of the time), though it has only one lyric. Alexis Krauss, on that next-level digital spit, explaining the locations of her machines. Actually, it's a bit stupefying to think that there could be any more than one (barely functioning) set of machines involved here. Must be complex.

—K. Ross Hoffman

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+ NEW

THE CARTEL | B

New Jersey spends as much or more on public schools than most other states, yet director Bob Bowdon sees the Garden State as an example of what's going wrong in U.S. school systems in general, despite a "spending explosion," Bowdon reports, spending can reach $400,000 per New Jersey classroom, and yet the outcome seems relentlessly grim. Only 39 percent of eighth graders read proficiently, and only 40 percent can manage math. More than 75 percent of New Jersey's high schools have been warned they may be placed on the state's list of failing schools. Having covered the state as a TV reporter and producer for some 15 years, Bowdon has plenty of research and interviews to support his contentions, mainly that the teachers' union and other corrupt organizations are to blame — teachers remain underpaid and students undereducated, as administrators make all kinds of money. Good teachers, the film argues, are poorly served by this union, which proscribes creativity (one teacher says she's unable to start a garden club because it's against union rules) and protects bad teachers. "Wanting lousy teachers out of the classroom doesn't mean you're against all teachers," says Bowdon, "A point so obvious I can't believe it needs to be made." And yet it does — apparently repeatedly. —*Cindy Fuchs (Ritz at the Bourse)*

DANCING ACROSS BORDERS | B

New York City arts patron and filmmaker Anas Bass remembers seeing Sokvannara "Sy" Sar, who learned to dance while growing up in rural Cambodia, perform a duet. "He was very flirtatious, his spirit was so full of fun and playfulness and joy." She was so moved that she decided to back Sy's ballet training and make a film about his experience. The documentary reveals an ongoing tension between Sy's identities, between dance as self-expression and exquisite artifice. For Sy being selected and financed by a nice white lady was a mixed blessing, fraught with difficulties beyond the obvious as physical rigors — the years of training, the daily grinding. The documentary is also something of a coax, focusing on Sy's dedication and his brilliance, but also revealing his extraordinary emotions and spirituality. Suddenly immersed in an alien culture, he's distressed even as he's thrilled. Working with Olga Kostritsky (who also taught Baryshnikov and Jock Soto), Sy learns the strange new dance (he'd never even seen ballet before), as well as a new language and customs. He's a remarkable talent, and has many border-crossings raise unanswerable questions about loss, exploitation and Western expectations. —*C.F. (Ritz at the Bourse)*

FURRY VENGEANCE

A haiku. Brendan Fraser does
battle with dudes who have sex
while dressed as mascots. *(Not reviewed) (UA Grant)*

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

A haiku. Freddy's back without
Johnny Depp, but still in need
of a manicure. *(See Drew Lazor's review at citypaper.net/movies.) (UA Grant, UA Main St., UA Riverview, UA 60th St.)*

THE SECRET IN THEIR EYES | C+

See Shaun Brady's review on p. 25. (Ritz Five)

WAKING SLEEPING BEAUTY | A-

In 1984 Disney's animation department was in dire straights. Aging animators and years of poor box office had weakened the once proud cartoon juggernaut. And then along came "a perfect storm" of people and circumstance

+ ALSO PLAYING

DATE NIGHT | B-
UA Grant, UA Riverview

THE GHOST WRITER | B-
Ritz Five

THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO | B
Ritz Five

THE JONESES | C+
Ritz East

VINCERE | A-
Ritz Five

For more full reviews and showtimes, go to citypaper.net/movies.

that reconstructed the house the Mouse built. Don Hahn's doc looks at the company's impossible 10-year run from 1984 to 1994, during which Disney — buoyed by fresh blood in the animation department and new studio heads (including Jeffrey Katzenberg, whose quote inspired the film's title) — produced such films as *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*. *Waking Sleeping Beauty* was lovingly made by the people in the thick of it, Hahn, who also serves as the narrator, was a producer on *Beast*, and his producing partner, Peter Schneider, was then-president of animation. It's this insider status that allows them to present a complete portrait, including home-video footage featuring vet animator Randy Cartwright (with John Lasseter behind the camera, and a shot of a very young Tim Burton). *Waking Sleeping Beauty* is touching, funny and could not have been made by anyone else. At one point, Hahn, as the narrator, says, "The work was intense, the hours were long. There was only one thing to stop it all ... margaritas." —*Molly Eichel (Ritz Five)*

+ CONTINUING

THE BACK-UP PLAN | C-

Ostensibly, Zoe (Jennifer Lopez) is one of those rare romantic-comedy heroines who take life by the balls. Rather than search for her elusive soul mate to get to the inevitable end-game of kids, she skips the middle man and opts for in vitro fertilization. But then, of course, love happens and Zoe's best-laid plans go to shit, much like her mopey. Love is in the form of Stan (Alex O'Loughlin), a cheese farmer who inexplicably decides to stay with this woman he's just met, even after she drops the bomb that she's knocked up. —*M.E. (UA Grant, UA Riverview, UA 69th St.)*

CLASH OF THE TITANS | C-

The revamped *Clash of the Titans* appropriates the main characters — demigod Perseus (Avatar's Sam Worthington) must defeat the monstrous Kraken to save the city of Argos — and stops only occasionally to wink and nod at the 1981 original in between the innumerable barbaric yawps, there's little in the way of plot. —*M.E. (Bridge, Pearl, Roxy, UA Grant, UA Riverview, UA 69th St.)*

EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP | A-

Banksy, the eponymous, subversive U.K. graffiti trickster, appears on camera at the outset, his face shrouded in darkness and voice altered, to explain how he'd turned from subject to filmmaker when he discovered that the film's original director was far more fascinating character. It's unclear, however, whether Thierry Guetta — the eccentric French-born video enthusiast whose footage provides an involuable document of street artists at work — is the bordering-on-insane clown presented in the film, a willing accomplice or a patsy manipulated by Banksy's puppetry or even the elusive artist himself. But, as recounted by Rhys Ifans' oily bedtime-story narration, Guetta transforms himself from a voyeur into an "artist" known as Mr. Brainwash to huge success. The result is an authentic assault on the art market, which gleefully hangs itself with Banksy's sandy offered rope. —*Shaun Brady (Ritz Five)*

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN | B

Drawn from a sensational real-life incident, André Téchiné's *The Girl on the Train* falls deliberately, if not always gracefully, between two stools. The movie begins in solid Téchiné territory, with the blossoming of a mildly inexplicable and evidently doomed romance between Jeanne (Émilie Dequenne) and Franck (Nicholas Duvauchelle), a headstrong thug whose aggression she takes for charm. The twin shack up, then crash and burn as only young lovers can. What happens next comes as a shock, although it likely wasn't so for French viewers who would be intimately familiar with the the 2004 episode in which a woman falsely claimed to have been the victim of an anti-Semitic attack by a gang of non-white youths. The potential for satire, a kind of hate-crime *Ace in the Hole*, is ripe, which may be why the elliptical Téchiné skips it altogether, focusing exclusively on the personal ramifications. —*Sam Adams (Ritz at the Bourse)*

GREENBERG | A-

Roger Greenberg (Ben Stiller) fresh off some sort of nervous breakdown and recently arrived in L.A., is a 40-year-old from at 25, at the instant just after his life went wrong. The sole new relationship that Greenberg strikes up is with Florence (mumblecore actress/director Greta Gerwig, who imbues Florence with a remarkable range of emotion), his brother's aimless personal assistant. Most films would paint Florence, the younger woman, as Greenberg's savior, the ray of light that leads to redemption. Director Noah Baumbach, however, has never seen other people as the solution to anyone's problems. The film, as a result, is often incredibly funny, and even holds out something like hope at the end. —*S.B. (Ritz East)*

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—Owen Gleiberman, ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

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ACIDLY FUNNY. EXPLOSIVELY SUCCINCT."
—David Edelstein, NEW YORK MAGAZINE

★★★★★ —Joshua Rothkopf, TIME OUT NY ★★★★★ —Elizabeth Weitzman, NY DAILY NEWS

"SUBVERSIVE, PROVOCATIVE, UNEXPECTED!
The more you think about this unusual film, THE MORE FASCINATING IT BECOMES!"
Kenneth Turan, LA TIMES

"GRADE 'A'! INCREDIBLY ENTERTAINING! BITINGLY HUMOROUS!" Nick Dey, CAMPUS CIRCLE

"GRADE 'A'! AMUSING, PROVOCATIVE, AND ENORMOUS FUN!" Gary Thompson, PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

"HILARIOUS! A GENUINELY HIP, THOUGHT-PROVOKING WORK OF ART!" Aaron Hillis, VILLAGE VOICE

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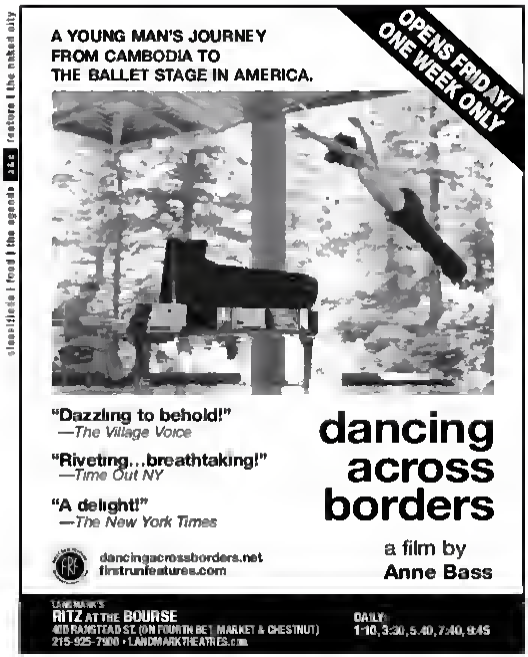

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bored teen who struggles with the idea that masked avengers aren't present in real life to regulate injustice. So the beanpole purchases all the appropriate accoutrement and essays into his new Kick-Ass menacing mayhem. When he runs aground in the lair of a drug lord, he's saved by Hit Girl (a tremendous Chloë Grace Moretz), a tween killing machine. She's a real crimefighter on a vigilante mission along with equally lethal Shatner-stammering father "Big Daddy" (Nicolas Cage) to wrest control of the underworld from mafia capo Frank D'Amico (Mark Strong). The real distinguishing characteristic of *Kick-Ass* is that it's devoid of all traces of mortal transcendence — there are no radioactive spider bites driving Dave to use his might to make right. There's no real motivation, even, for him to pick up the hero torch; save for something we all long for at one point or another: the desire to be admired. —*Drew Lazor (Pearl, UA Grant, UA Riverview, UA 69th St.)*

THE LOSERS | C

If movies were judged on the sheer number of times the ensemble cast walks in slow motion set to base-heavy music with the sole direction of "look like a badass," then *The Losers* is *Gone With the Wind*. —*M.E. (Pearl, Roxy, UA Grant, UA Main St., UA Riverview, UA 69th St.)*

THE SQUARE | A–

Delivering on the promise director Nash Edgerton displayed in his gleefully nasty short *Spider* (which unspools before the feature) *The Square* alternates between nervous hilarity and gasp-inducing shock. After Carlo (Claire van der Boom) discovers her husband's bag of cash, she gives her married lover Ray (David Roberts) an ultimatum. Help her steal the dough and escape or she will end their relationship. Injecting mildly violent moments that unnerve, Ray thus outright film becomes more absorbing as obstacles keep him from his morally dubious goal. *The Square* remains gripping right up to the riveting end — when Edgerton pulls the rug — and the floor — out from under everyone. —*Gary M. Kramer (Ritz at the Bourse)*

+ REPERTORY FILM

Send repertory film listings to molly.eichel@citypaper.net

THE BALCONY

Trocadero Theater, 1003 Arch St., 215-922-LIVE, thetroc.com. ***Shaun of the Dead*** (2004, U.K., 99 min.) Zombie killing, with tongue planted firmly in cheek. Mon., May 3, 8 p.m. $3

GREATER PHILADELPHIA FILM OFFICE

Prince Music Theater, 1412 Chestnut St., second floor, film.org. **Location, Location, Location!** Learn about the importance of a location manager. Tue., May 4, 6-8:30 p.m., free, RSVP to jean@film.org.

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

Ibrahim Theater, 3701 Chestnut St., 215-387-5125, thousephilly.org. ***HomeGrown: HipLife in Ghana*** (2008, U.S., 58 min.) ***& The Revival*** (2008, Austria/Czech Republic/Denmark/Germany/Sweden/Switzerland/U.S., 16 min.) The former explores the combo of hip-hop and West African music, while the latter chronicles the first meeting of Roxanne Shante and Philly's own Bahamadia. Tue., May 4, 7 p.m., $5-$8. ***The Hand of Fatima*** (2009, U.S., 75 min.) A tribute to former *New York Times* music critic Robert Palmer, who died in 1997, and his favorite band, Master Musicians of Jajouka. Wed., May 5, 7 p.m., $5-$8.

LITTLE THEATER

7141 Germantown Ave., 215-247-3020, mtsurvindeolibrary.com. ***Crazy Heart*** (2009, U.S., 112 min.) A journalist (Maggie Gyllenhaal) redeems a broken-down country singer (Jeff Bridges). Fri.-Sat., April 30-May 1, 8 p.m.; Sun., May 2, 7 p.m. $6

MUGSHOTS COFFEEHOUSE AND CAFÉ

2100 Fairmount Ave., 267-514-7145, mugshotscoffeehouse.com. ***The Men Who Stare at Goats*** (2009, U.K./U.S., 94 min.) A satirical look at the military's secret telepathic unit. Sun., May 2, 7 p.m., free. ***Once*** (2006, Ireland, 85 min.) The sleeper-hit musical romance. Wed., May 5, 7 p.m., free.

PHILADELPHIA CITY INSTITUTE LIBRARY

1905 Locust St., 215-685-6621. ***The Shop on Main Street (Obchod na korze)*** (1965, Czechoslovakia, 128 min.) A man is offered an old Jewish widow's sewing shop during WWII-era Slovakia and they form a friendship. Wed., May 5, 2 p.m., free.

PIFVA

ÉTage, 624 S. Sixth St., 215-592-0656, pifva.org. **Cinema SPEAKEASY** Celebrate the works of local filmmaker Alison Crease. Tue., May 4, 7:30 p.m., free.

PIAZZA AT SCHMIDTS

1050 N. Hancock St., atthepiazza.com. ***American Grindhouse*** (2010, U.S., 80 min.) A looks at American exploitation films, from the beginning of cinema to the '70s, in all of their gory glory. Fri., April 30, dusk, free.

WILLIAM WAY CENTER

1315 Spruce St., 215-732-2220, waygay.org. ***Coming Out Under Fire*** (1994, U.S., 72 min.) Explores the military's policy on gays and lesbians during WWII. Thu., May 6, 7 p.m., free.

More on citypaper.net

icepack

By A.D. Amorosi

"I REMEMBER YOU WROTE the very first press on this project and now I'm super lucking fancy?" laughs photographer **Zoe Strauss**, recounting how 10 years ago I devoted some ink to her sub-interstate exhibition at Front and Mifflin. "Isn't that crazy?" Then and now the **I-95** show's been free to all, with photocopies of her work a mere $5 each. Strauss made her bones with I-95's starkly surreal yet neighborly shots of Philadelphians at their torn-and-tattered (but proud) best. Since 2000, Strauss published a book (***America***) and booked her first solo show at the **Philadelphia Museum of Art** for 2012. And I-95? On May 2, 1–4 p.m., she'll hold her last one. "The project has to be over. That's how I planned it, 10 years and done." While a decade is the right amount of time to have devoted to I-95 — "long enough to make a strong body of work and a set ending point to make sure the project isn't overworked" — it's important to note how Strauss found beauty in unexpected places. Whether making gorgeous drama from homeless junkie women or turning the crack that separates I-95's north and southbound lanes underneath the highway into poetry worthy of Leonard Cohen ("that's how the light gets in") that project will be missed and cherished for eternity. ➤ Last Saturday, it was a battle of the new barroom: **Daniel Stern**'s post-10 p.m. version of **R2L** (**BAR2L**) or **Stephen Starr**'s bordello-red wallpapered, naughty-painting-filled **RanstedRoom** behind **El Rey**. BAR2L had nice views and tony drinks like Whiskey Rebellion. But the 40-plus-seat speakeasy-ish Ranstead ("When it's full, there's no getting in," says drink coulturalier **Sasha Petraske**) has a dark, private vibe and handcrafted cocktails so spicy my lips are still burning. Atza nize. See you at the Ranslead. ➤ **Thrill Jockey** ain't done with the late **Jack Rose** yet. Not only will the Chicago label release an eponymous EP from Rose and **D. Charles Speer & The Helix**, their website's selling *Honest Strings: A Tribute*, featuring **Pelt**, **Bardo Pond** (currently playing Euro festivals at the behest of **Laura Anderson** and **Lou Reed**) and more. ➤ West Philly's hard-soul **Out da Basement** has a busy May. OdB start a Tuesday jam session at Tritone; join **Reg Chuck D** and new DJ **Kyle Andrews** for Wishbone's monthly R&B party at National Mechanics May 3, and play the Balcony May 26 with pal **Joe Jardan** and **Puzzlebox**. ➤ Philly's **ActionAIDS' Dining Out for Life** celebrates its 20th anniversary April 29 with spokespersons **Pam Grier** and **Food Network**-er **Ted Allen** aboard. While they sup at Butcher & Singer (look for my chat with Allen at citypaper.net/icepack), it's a must you eat at any participating venue. It's our best homegrown fundraiser.

(a_amorosi@citypaper.net)

NATE DOGG: Nathaniel Holt (top) discusses his amicable breakup with comedy songwriter soulmate Gavin Riley

NEAL SANTOS

[funny farewell]

BIG PUNS

Satiric hip-hop duo Rowan & Hastings calls it a day. By Julia West

WELCOME TO THE TERRORDOME IV | *Fri., April 30, 9 p.m., $10, Johnny Brenda's, 1201 N. Frankford Ave., 877-435-9849, johnnybrendas.com*

It ain't easy being half of a comedic hip-hop duo, but the naturally funny Nathaniel Holt of Rowan & Hastings doesn't make it look hard. Too bad he and Gavin Riley are bringing an end to their fence-straddling blend of hip-hop satire and goofy rhymes — for now. It's been a while since they performed together, but R&H both reunites and waves goodbye at Welcome to the Terrordome IV: The One Where Rocky Fights the Russian, with Secret Pants, Meg & Rob and The Sixth Borough.

City Paper: Can you describe a typical Rowan & Hastings show?

Nathaniel Holt: Although it's true that our songs often have a sketch-like structure, we don't really do traditional sketches.

We also improvise weird conversations with the audience between songs. We used to do this bit where I would rant about politics, and then Gavin would say, "Well let me play devil's advocate for a moment," which was followed by footage from the movie of the same name with Al Pacino screaming flames shooting out of his head. That was kinda like a sketch. And I just ruined the punchline. We also dance spastically.

CP: Is this really goodbye?

NH: I have a little egg on my face. I can't say for sure that this will be our last show ever. We broke up as a songwriting duo a couple years ago, and we are moving away to new cities [Gavin to Baltimore, Nathan to State College], so this show will be our "Farewell to Philly" show, meaning our last show for any foreseeable future. But we are great friends, only 28 years old, and do not yet have arthritis, so it would be foolish to say we will definitely never play again. — Why is this the case? Gavin caught me snuggling with his teddy bear, and never forgave me. At that very moment, he said, "That's it. I'm going solo."

CP: Do you have a favorite weird thing about Philly?

NH: My friends and I — Gavin included — are always on the lookout for the largest dead rat we can find. Philly is a great place for this. It became a custom for one person to find a severely decomposed dead cat or possum, and then try to convince the others that the remains were of rat origin. Investigative group field trips became a priority. Largest dead rat found: 10th and Oregon.

> Largest rat found: 10th and Oregon.

CP: What are you guys planning on doing for your solo work?

NH: Gavin is working on a Choose Your Own Adventure album and live show, which is amazing so far. I have been acting for theater companies in Philly, and am breaking from that while I am out of town. — I'm also working with a friend to create a folk duo who are time-traveling unemployed dock workers from 2250.

(julia.west@citypaper.net)

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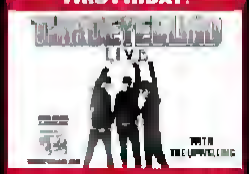

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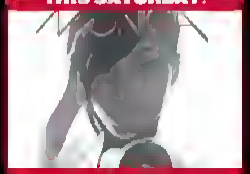
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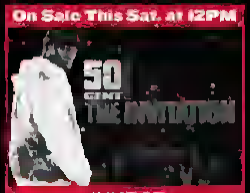

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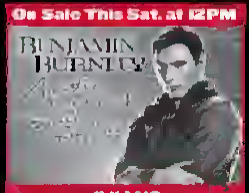

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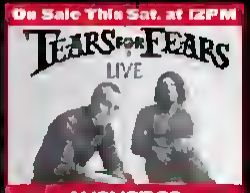

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6.05 SOJA with Tsunami Rising & Among Criminals
6.06 LES CLAYPOOL with Ont Head Show
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✚ LGBTQ

■ **BOB & BARBARA'S DRAG SHOW** Miss Lisa Lisa hosts Philly's longest-running drag show. If you jump on stage, don't be surprised if she gives you a spanking, it's called tough love. Every Thu., 11pm-1am. $6. Bob & Barbara's, 1509 South St. 215-545-4511.

■ **BULGE** Leave your clothes at the door at this weekly underwear-only party. Minimal dress code will be enforced. Every Wed., 9pm-2am. $5. The Bike Stop, 206 S. Quince St. 215-627-1662.

■ **COLOURS SOCIAL** This weekly activity group is for LGBTQ members of color who are 13 to 23 years old. Every Tue. 6-8:30pm. FREE. Colours Organization, 112 N. Broad St. 215-496-0330.

■ **CREATIVE ARTS GROUP** Some things can't be expressed through words. Work it out with a paintbrush and watercolor at this art therapy group, which focuses on LGBTQ issues. Every Thu., 6-7:30pm. FREE. Mazzoni Center, 809 Locust St. 215-563-0652.

■ **FINS SWIM PRACTICE** Practice your backstroke with resort-holding and amateur swimmers at FINS Aquatic Club, Philly's gay and lesbian swim team. Every Mon., Tue. & Thu. 7-8:30pm; every Sat. 10-11:30am. $10. Friends Select School Pool, 1651 Ben Franklin Parkway. 215-561-5900.

■ **FRONTRUNNER'S PHILLY FUN RUN** Join this gay and lesbian running group as they gallop down Kelly Drive and back. Every Sat., 8:30am-noon. $20. Lloyd Hall, 1 Boathouse Row. 610-394-9182.

■ **GLBT FLAG FOOTBALL** Work out some aggression at the Philadelphia Flag Football League's weekly game, where anyone can participate, regardless of age or gender. Every Sat., noon-2:30pm. FREE. Parken Recreational Center, 6250 Frontenac St. 215-685-1226.

■ **HOMOROBICS** Dig out those rainbow-colored tee socks and that glittery midriff top for this class, where you'll dance to divas' hits and firm your tush at the same time. Fun attire is strongly encouraged. Every Sun. 7-8:15pm. $10. Crossfit Gym, 201 S. Camac St. 856-220-0856.

■ **LIVING OUT LOUD** LGBTQ adults meet to focus on cultivating and maintaining a positive self-image. Every Mon., noon-1pm. FREE. Mazzoni Center, 809 Locust St. 215-563-0652.

■ **MEN OF COLOUR UNITED** This weekly discussion group offers support, education and prevention programs to gay and bisexual men of color. Every Wed., 6-8pm. FREE. Colours Inc., 1201 Chestnut St., 215-496-0330.

■ **PHILADELPHIA FREEDOM BAND PRACTICE** The Philadelphia Freedom Band is a concert band for amateur musicians of every sexual persuasion; gay, lesbian, bi, transgender and straight are all welcome. No auditions necessary. Every Mon., 7-9pm. FREE. Arch Street United Methodist Church, 55 N. Broad St. 215-568-6250.

■ **POSITIVE BROTHERS** If you're a man of color living with HIV/AIDS, this support and empowerment group is geared toward you. Every Mon., 6-8pm. FREE. Colours Organization, 112 N. Broad St. 215-496-0330.

■ **QSPACE** These weekly chat programs provide support, information and resources for those seeking to learn more about sexual orientation and gender identity. Every Mon. & Wed. 5pm. FREE. Penn's LBGT Center, 3907 Spruce St. 215-898-5044.

■ **QUEER WRITER'S COLLECTIVE** This workshop and discussion group is designed to help aspiring writers express issues specific to the LGBTQ community. Every Last Sat. 4-6pm. FREE. William Way Community Center, 1315 Spruce St., 215-732-2220.

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✚ AGENDA PICKS

[jew-vies]

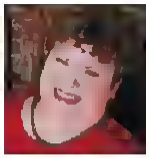
➤ PHILADELPHIA JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL NEW FILMMAKERS WEEKEND

The New Filmmakers Weekend rounds out the Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival with work by the new guys. *HAG: The Story of the Hasidic Actors Guild* is a mockumentary riffing on director Yisrael Lifschutz's experiences as a consultant to films with Hasidic characters. Philly resident Nicole Opper's doc *Off and Running*, which won the jury prize for best documentary at last year's QFest, follows Avery (pictured), a black adoptee of two Jewish lesbians as she begins exploring her roots. In Yoram Sacha *Nymphs in the Mist*, a guy nursing a broken heart decides to make a film about the experience, hoping to meet some hot Tel Aviv babes in the process. Each director will be on hand to talk about their work. *Sat. May 1. Mon. May 3. $5. $12. Gershman Y, 401 S. Broad St., 215-545-4400, pjff.org.*

—Sam Kaplan

[blood lust]

➤ CHARLAINE HARRIS



Charlaine Harris, author of the Sookie Stackhouse novels, is not a great writer. In a rare turn, the TV adaptation of her most famous work—HBO's *True Blood*, which premieres its third season Sun., June 13—has more depth than its written-word counterpart. But goddamnit if the yarn isn't the equivalent of literary crack. And ever since I picked up the first novel, *Dead Until Dark*—about the titular telepathic waitress and her vampire lover Bill, living in small-town Louisiana—I've been jonesing for more. Harris skips the purple prose of similarly fantastical books for frank straight talk. Sookie is a strong central character, a rare sass-filled heroine with a romantic interest who doesn't treat her in the presence of her idealized male hero. Harris will read from *Dead in the Family* (Ace), her 10th Stackhouse novel, out this month. Finally, a fix. *Wed., May 5. 7:30 p.m. free. Free Library Central Branch, 1901 Vine St., 215-567-4341, freelibrary.org.*

—Molly Eichel

[zine all about it]

➤ TRICKGO ZINE YARD SALE

Courtney Brown and Jackie Barry, juniors at the University of the Arts, have concocted an ambitious extracurricular activity: a zine yard sale. "We wanted to have the local art community meet the actual community of Philadelphia," Brown says. With about 40 expected participants, the idea evolved into an all-day event at fellow UArts junior Matt Trigaux's TrickGo Boutique. Along with zines by students, the sale includes Greg Pizzoli's kids books, NoseGo photos and the Holly Holly Hob by Hobby zine series. Contribute a doodle during the afternoon selling period, come back at 7 p.m. to pick up a zine including

>>> continued on page 40

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■ **RAINBOW BUDDHIST MEDITATION** Meditate with other enlightened members of the LGBTQ community Every Sun 5-7pm **FREE** William Way Community Center 1315 Spruce St. 215-732-2220

■ **READING RAINBOW** Attendees run read and discuss texts related to the LGBTQ experience and growing up in general Every Thu, 5-7pm, **FREE** Attic Youth Center 255 S 18th St. 215-545-4331

■ **SHOWTUNE SUNDAYS** Bring your fair lady out on a technicolor dream coat and come hang out with some guys and dolls who share your love of show tunes. The DJ will play clips from Broadway shows and movie musicals and singing along is highly encouraged. Every Sun, 9-11pm, **FREE** Tavern On Camac, 243 S. Camac St. 215-545-0900

■ **SISTAH 2 SISTAH** This weekly meeting for young lesbians of color addresses issues affecting the community Every Wed 6-8pm **FREE**, Colours Organization 112 N Broad St, 215-496-0330

■ **SYNERGY** Brittany Lynn, the Gayberhood's matron saint, performs at this weekly drag show Every Sun 10pm-2am $10-KatManDu 50 Riverview Plaza Park Trenton NJ 609-393 7250

■ **ULTRA SUNDAYS** This new weekly LGBTQ dance party is presented by Dan Centarino. Every Sun 8pm $6-$8 G Lounge, 111 S 17th St. 215-564-1815

■ **WISSAHICKON HIKE** Get some fresh air while making friends at this meeting for PhilaVentures, an LGBTQ hiking group. Every Sun, 2pm **FREE**, Borders, Chestnut Hill, 8701 Germantown Ave., 215-248-1213.

✚ MUSIC

➤ rock/pop

THURSDAY 4/29

■ **BODY LANGUAGE** with City Rain 8pm $10 Kung Fu Necktie, 1250 N Front St 215-291-4919

■ **ELDER BROTHER** with Kill You in the Face Daikaiju & Abstract Artimus 9pm $8 Khyber 56 S. 2nd St 215-238 5888

■ **HIDEOUS MEN** with Night of Joy 8pm $5 $10 Danger Danger Gallery 5013 Baltimore Ave myspace.com/dangerdangergallery

■ **PIGEON JOHN** with Bunju Kaf Kastz Tom Capson and Lazard Kings & Jawnsay 7 8pm $12 Fire, 412 W Girard Ave 267-671 9298

■ **SMALL TARGETS** 9pm $8 North Star Bar 2639 Poplar St., 215-684 0808

■ **THE ATOMIC DROPS** with Loafass & The Warhawks 9pm, $8 M Room 15 W Girard Ave. 215-739-5577

■ **THE NADAS** 8pm $10-$12, World Café Live 3025 Walnut St., 215-222 1400

FRIDAY 4/30

■ **DOWNTOWN HARVEST** with Stonethrow JJ Demon & Michael K. Fox 10pm $11 World Café Live 3025 Walnut St 215 222 1400

■ **FRIGHTENED RABBIT** 8pm First Unitarian Church 2125 Chestnut St 215 563-3980

■ **HALESTORM** with Janus Burn Halo & Madam Adam 7pm $18, TLA 334 South St 215 922 1011

■ **INFINIEN** with Store Cats & September 9pm $7 Fire 412 W Girard Ave 267-671 9298

■ **JESSE RUBEN** 8pm $16 World Cafe Live 3025 Walnut St 215-222-1400

■ **JOHN DOE** with Exene Cervenka, 7:30pm $20 Tin Angel, 20 S. 2nd St. 215 928-0770

■ **PEELANDER-Z** with The Last Barbarians The Rumblers & Fakirs 9pm $10 Khyber, 56 S 2nd St 215-238-5888

■ **READE MCCARDELL** with Carla Odinaev & Anders Hyatt 10:30pm $6 Tin Angel 20 S. 2nd St., 215-928-0770

■ **THE GREEN EVENING REQUIEM** with Gwynhledd Dirt Worshipper & Deathbeda 9pm $8 Millcreek Tavern 4200 Chester Ave. 215-222-9194

■ **THE PAUL COLLINS BEAT** with The Tough Shits Invisible Friends & The Midnight Beat 8pm $10 M Room, 15 W Girard Ave 215 739-5577

■ **URBAN GIANTS** with Michael Chance Band Captive Kin & Only the Brave, 9pm, $9 North Star Bar 2639 Poplar St. 215-684-0808

■ **VAMPIRE HANDS** with Daughters of the Sun & Far Out Fangtooth, 9pm $5-$10 Danger Danger Gallery, 5013 Baltimore Ave., myspace.com/dangerdangergallery

SATURDAY 5/1

■ **AIRBOURNE** with High Council 9pm $10 North Star Bar 2639 Poplar St., 215-684-0808

■ **AMONG CRIMINALS** 9pm, $10 World Café Live 3025 Walnut St 215-222-1400

■ **EAST HUNDRED** with Hungry Kids of Hungary & The Swimmers 9:30pm, $10 Johnny Brenda's 1201 N Frankford Ave 215 739 9684

■ **GIFT HORSE** with Twin Tigers 7pm $7 Fire 412 W Girard Ave 267-671-9298

■ **MONDO TOPLESS** with The Three 4 Tens & DJ Christian Osgood, 7:30pm, $8 Kung Fu Necktie, 1250 N Front St., 215 291-4919

■ **MOUTH** with Shadowplay Free The Empire For Years To Come Lavanna and the Mothership & Wynrise 2pm $12 The Balcony 1003 Arch St, 215 922 5463

■ **RED ROOSTER** with Schuylkill River Outlaws & Bread St Blues 9:30pm $5 Tritone 1508 South St. 215 545-0475

■ **SURGEON** with Big Terrible & Megalodenia 9pm $7 Fire 412 W Girard Ave 267-671-9298

SUNDAY 5/2

■ **CREATURES OF PREY** with Attia Taylor Art Sorority for Girls & DJ Vernon Girl 8pm **FREE** Kung Fu Necktie, 1250 N Front St. 215-291-4919

■ **DEVIN SPROULE** with The Young Republic & Chris Kasper 8pm $7 World Café Live 3025 Walnut St., 215-222-1400

■ **GRAHAM PARKER AND THE FIGGS** 7:30pm, $25-$35 World Café Live 3025 Walnut St. 215-222 1400

■ **READING RAINBOW** with Soft Landing & Icy Demons 7pm $10 Little Berlin, 119 W Montgomery Ave. 610-306-0679

■ **SIA** with Garl Is a Cama, 8pm, $20 TLA, 334 South St. 215-922-1011

■ **SINDEN** with DJ Sega Flufftronix & Dirty South Joe, 9pm $15, Khyber 56 S 2nd St 215-238-5888

■ **THE ALBUM LEAF** with Sea Wolf 8:30pm $12 $13 First Unitarian Church 2125 Chestnut St., 215-563-3980

MONDAY 5/3

■ **MEMORYHOUSE** 8pm $8, Kung Fu Necktie 1250 N Front St. 215 291-4919

■ **OK DO** with Earl Greyhound & The Bone 7pm $17 TLA, 334 South St 215-922-1011

■ **SHOUT OUT LOUDS** with Freelance Whales, 8pm, $13, First Unitarian Church, 2125 Chestnut St., 215-563-3980

■ **THE DANGEROUS MAYBES** 9:30pm, $5 Tritone 1508 South St., 215-545-0475

TUESOAY 5/4

■ **ALL LEATHER** with Extra

✚ Agenda Picks

<<< continued from page 38

your design, drink some PBR and listen to some tunes. *Sat., May 1. Zine Yard Sale noon-4 p.m. Collaborative Zine Release Party, 7-10 p.m. free, TrickGo Boutique 1135 Pine St. trickgoclothing.com*

—Emily Currier

[geekgasm]

FREE COMIC BOOK OAY

Nerds everywhere squeal! Philly spots celebrate the self-explanatory holiday in their own way. At Brave New Worlds (45 N. Second St. 215-925-6525) a legion of Storm Troopers, Spiderman and an 8-foot-tall Hulk will be on tap while members of the Philly Cartooning Society draw on site. The Ontario Street Comic Shop (2235 E. Ontario St., 215-285-7338) keeps the celebration going for a week. "We know that everyone can't set their schedule for Free Comic Day so we extend it so everyone can enjoy," says owner Bill Fink. Like many other affiliated stores Ontario Street will debut two gratis comics: one tied in with the release of *Iron Man 2* and *War of the Supermen*, a new storyline from DC Comics. Other hot spots like Fat Jack's Comicrypt (2006 Sansom St. 215-963-0788) and Atomic City Comics (692 South St. 215-625-9613) promise freebies of all varieties. *Sat. May 1. freecomicbookday.com.*

—Mandy Bee

[swashbuckling]

➤ *THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD*

This sweeping desire for historical realism is a pain in the good-time-lovin' ass. So sure the Ridley Scott-Russell Crowe *Robin Hood* (out Fri. May 14) will feature the bloody testosterone-laden reality of medieval Britain. But what fun is that? As the feather-capped philanthropist in the 1938 version of the much-adapted legend, Errol Flynn is the warrior at his most dashing, falling for the beautiful Maid Marian (Olivia de Havilland) and battling the evil Guy of Gisbourne (future Sherlock Holmes Basil Rathbone) and Prince John (the great Claude Rains). Yeah, Scott and Crowe may tell it like it is, but Flynn will make you feel like a kid again. *Fri. April 30-Thu. May 6, various times, Roxy Theatre, 2023 Sansom St., 215-923-6699.*

—Molly Eichel

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+ THE STAR-SPANGLED BADASS

➤ **MAURICE RUSS IS** just as important as any blocker or jammer in the Philly Roller Girls. Russ sings the national anthem—but that's putting it lightly. He wails it, he pounds it and he makes sure "The Star-Spangled Banner" could beat up any other nation's anthem. A parts adviser to a BMW dealership by day, and rock star with the Empty Shapes by night, Russ hooked up with the PRG before their inaugural 2005 season so he could write up the league for Tric Zine. When their "Star Spangled" singer dropped out, Russ issued some famous last words. "I can sing the national anthem."

City Paper: Do you have any favorite national anthem performances? Whitney? Roseanne?

Maurice Russ: There was one by Marvin Gaye that I heard when I was a kid that is really cool. It's just him with a metronome in the background doing this R&B version.

CP: I was thrown when I heard Empty Shapes, especially when you compared yourself to a droney band like the Dead C. I thought you worshipped at the altar of Steve Perry.

MR: I'm more on the noise rock end of the spectrum. Mostly I'm known for my live antics. I'm not just gonna stand onstage and look at the crowd. I'm gonna be out and mixing. I've done scissor kicks. A few times I've ended up nude. *[laughs]* I've been known to get on top of bars, grab bottles of booze. It gets thirsty singing.

CP: Do you have a roller derby name?

MR: When I was an announcer I had a nickname but everyone already knew me as Mo, so it never stuck. My roller derby name was Marcus Hook, but only two girls got it because most of them were from Jersey [at that time].

CP: If you rearranged an epic national anthem duet, who would your partner be?

MR: It's all according to feeling. A lot of the time when I sing for the Philly Roller Girls, I don't know exactly how I'm going to sing it until right before I sing it, depending on what mood I'm in. I could see me getting guttural with Rob Zombie or actually trying to harmonize with Al Jarreau.

—Molly Eichel

◆ *Empty Shapes, Thu. April 29, 9 p.m. $10, with Carlton Melton, Caterpillar and Birds Fond Johnny Brenda's, 1201 N. Frankford Ave. 877-435-9849, johnnybrendas.com; Philly Roller Girls, Sun. May 2, 3-8 p.m. $12-$20, Class of 1923 Arena, 3130 Walnut St., phillyrollergirls.com*

| the agenda |

Tongue & Penny Pants, 8pm. $5-$10. Danger Danger Gallery, 5013 Baltimore Ave., myspace.com/dangerdangergallery

■ **CONSTELLATIONS** with Orbit to Leslie & The Revere, 7pm. $10. North Star Bar, 2639 Poplar St., 215-684-0908

■ **GIVERS** with Post Pant, 8pm. $8. Kung Fu Necktie, 1250 N. Front St., 215-291-4918

■ **JAVELINA** with Lord Manias, Jail & Wizard Eye, 8pm. $8. M Room, 15 W. Girard Ave., 215-739-5577

■ **MIKE KENEALLY BAND** with The Bryan Beller Band, 7:30pm. $24-$34. World Cafe Live, 3025 Walnut St., 215-923-1400

■ **VICE ROYAL** with Patterns, Theopolis Jones & The Fashionistas, 6pm. $8. Khyber, 56 S. 2nd St., 215-238-5888

More on citypaper.net

◆ MORE L... AND THEY SC...

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FRIDAY, MAY 7 AT 9PM

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ALO — ANIMAL LIBERATION ORCHESTRA — CHRIS VELAN wxpn — FRIDAY MAY 21 8PM

ALEXISONFIRE — TRASH TALK TIREFIRE I AM LA DISPUTE — SAT MAY 22 8PM

OF MONTREAL — NOOT D'NOOT — SAT MAY 29 8PM

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The Lost Gunbarians
The Rumblers, Fokkin

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Kettle Pot Shade, Fishstick

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4 TUESDAY 8PM
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WITH [illegible] | [illegible] MAY 6 | 9PM

AQUALUNG
WITH BETA-VOLVERE | SATURDAY MAY 8 | 8PM

Shelby Lynne
WITH FINDLAY BROWN | [illegible] MAY [illegible] | 10PM | $[illegible]

Alô Brasil
[illegible]

CHARLIE MARS
[illegible] | [illegible] MAY [illegible] | [illegible]

PATTY LARKIN
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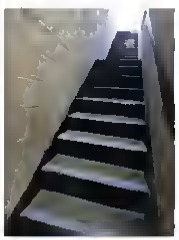

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By Felicia D'Ambrosio

GET A ROOM

➤ **JUST A FEW** years ago, city drinkers on a quest for a mixture more interesting than a gin and tonic but less tooth-decaying than an Appletini had a choice — Southwark or Chick's? Today, a thriving set of cocktail bars and like-minded restaurants are attracting customers. Stephen Starr who'll find out if he won the prize for Outstanding Restaurateur at the James Beard Foundation Awards May 3, stepped into the fray this past Sunday with the opening of the Ranstead Room, the speakeasy-like annex to his new Mexi-kitsch El Rey (see p. 48), with which it shares an address and a kitchen.

With Manhattans and Aviations no longer such rare birds, Starr called in a heavy hitter to set apart Ranstead's drinks list: Sasha Petraske, the brain behind New York's standard-setting Milk & Honey and Dutch Kills. He developed a list of nine drinks evocative of the '40s and '50s, all relying on the fresh-squeezed juice and hand-chipped ice de rigueur for proper $12 tipples.

If sips like the Boulevardier (bourbon, Campari, sweet vermouth) or Sands Cocktail (gin, grapefruit and lemon juices, maraschino liqueur) don't tempt, guests can request "bartender's choice" and provide a few words of direction for a custom cup. In addition to curating the classics, Petraske created the House Special, an original recipe. Blanco tequila, chili piquin, lemon juice and sugar play nicely with a selection of tacos, gorditas, guacamole and albondigas; drinkers can order off chef Dionicio Jimanez's El Rey menu.

As with other Starr projects, aesthetics drive Ranstead Room's environment as much as the drinks. Designer Shawn Hausman transformed the former Midtown IV Diner's back room into a 44-seat black velvet fantasy, lining the snug, wine-hued space with vintage wallpaper, polished golden tiling and R-rated artwork. "The environment is supposed to be extremely low-key," says Petraske. "It's a room for grownups." That feel is enhanced by the bar's covert entrance on alley-like Ranstead Street, between Chestnut and Market, the security door marked only with a slim "RR" logo.

Ranstead's small size and no-reservations policy could mean a wait during prime hours, as they are adamant about not exceeding their 44-person capacity. "The cocktails, however good they may be, are only one part of the service," says Petraske. "Our primary goal is to create a room for people who know how to remain polite and quiet, no matter how many drinks they've had."

(felicia.dambrosio@citypaper.net)

✦ *Ranstead Room, 2013 Chestnut St. (enter on Ranstead Street), 215-563-3330, open nightly at 7 p.m.*

TRIPLE THREAT. Tacos Don Memo's Leo Saavedra makes some of the best Mexican food in Philly. He's already expanded his lunch cart business into a sit-down restaurant, and he's now in the process of moving into a bigger truck that'll allow him to beef up his street-food menu.

NEAL SANTOS

[review]

GOT THE MEMO

From street cart to restaurant and back again, Leo Saavedra is a Mexican master. **By Trey Popp**

TACOS DON MEMO | *38th and Sansom streets, 610-529-2039. Summer hours: Mon.-Sat., 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m., closed Sun. Tacos, $2; tostadas, $3; tortas, $6; burritos, $6.*

DON MEMO MEXICAN RESTAURANT | *57 Garrett Road, Upper Darby, 610-352-2376. Mon.-Thu., 11 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri.-Sat., 11 a.m.-midnight, Sun., 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Appetizers, $2.50-$9.95; entrées, $7.95-$14.95. Delivery available. Wheelchair accessible.*

God bless Bobby Flay and his new Burger Palace. Bless the University of Pennsylvania's real estate team for bringing the chain to Walnut Street. Bless the bloggers who've broadcasted its PR puffery. Bless the star-struck students who've abandoned their usual lunch haunts to join the Palace's hourlong ordering lines.

More on citypaper.net

I don't know the true mastermind behind this grand conspiracy, this neighborhood-scale magic trick, but I have a hunch about where he's eating his lunch. Dollars to pesos it's around the corner at Tacos Don Memo, where, for practically the first time in three years, the midday wait for two tacos al pastor has dropped below 5 minutes.

Since Leo Saavedra wheeled this shiny, closet-size cart up to the 38th Street curb in 2007, that wait has more frequently topped the 10-minute mark. Some poor addicts salivate for longer. You see them sitting on the concrete embankment near the 7-Eleven parking lot, or, if they're skinny enough, on the absurd pair of kindergarten-size folding chairs Saavedra deploys next to a couple dairy crates on the sidewalk. (Rather astonishingly, there have been no crumpled chairs to date.)

Saavedra, a native of Guerrero, Mexico, who named his business in honor of his grandfather, sells burritos, tostadas, torta sandwiches and tacos. That list is in ascending order of quality, with the tacos al pastor in pole position. A double-tortilla wrap cradles a griddle-fried dice of spicy pork in which every single morsel seems edged with the perfect crisp. There's a bit of pineapple, a tuft of cilantro, a thorough douse of chipotle salsa as earthy as kiln dust. By the time you squeeze your eighth of a lime on top, the doubled tortilla has become a structural necessity: barely enough insurance against sloppy disintegration that you can still revel in its threat.

MORE FOOD AND DRINK COVERAGE AT CITYPAPER.NET/MEALTICKET

This taut $2 package of tightly packed flavors is what Don Memo does far and away the best — better than any other food cart in town, and better than anything else that emerges from this one. The burritos here are flavor-diluted by comparison. The brittle crunch of deep-fried tortillas recommends the tostados as an occasional departure, especially when the asphalt's shimmering and you really need some crunchy iceberg lettuce to cool you down — in which case, go with the tomatillo salsa, colored like the bright stripes on a watermelon and practically thirst-quenching in its fruity muldness. But the tacos al pastor are

>>> continued on page 48

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NEAL SANTOS

what it's all about

That may change. A few months ago, Saavedra put in his paperwork for permission to operate a bigger truck capable of supporting a broader menu. If he gets it, the business will boost the rare distinction of having boomsranged from food cart, to brick-and-mortar restaurant, and back to an expanded presence on the street. About a year after Don Memo first set up shop at 38th and Sansom streets, it branched out in Upper Darby with a casual BYO a couple of blocks from the 69th Street Transit Station.

The family-style cooking at Don Memo's sit-down location is short on frills, but there are several things to like — including a few that would push the street-side operation, pending expansion, to the next level. There's a superbly rendered pohlano mole. If it can rescue the dryish chicken shreds in an Upper Darby trio of enchiladas, it could work wonders in the truck's burritos. The restaurant also offers hefty tamales — studded with far moister chunks of chicken — that would travel well.

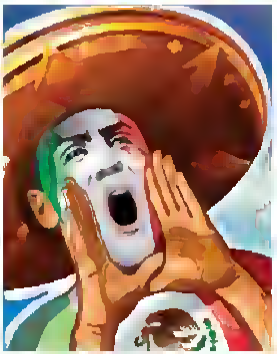
Saavedra would face a stiffer challenge reproducing the restaurant's winning way with fresh masa harina, which is the best justification for trekking out to Upper Darby I've rarely seen a pile of beef tongue quite so heaping as on a giant huarache, but the simple, pliant substrate emerged as the dish's best feature — superior, in fact, to the actual huaraches at Distrito (their strength lies in more intensely flavored toppings). Better still was a soft pupusa stuffed with just enough cheese to register, but not enough to weigh down a snack whose surprisingly delicate profile made the traditional accompaniment of watery, slightly sour tomato sauce sing.

The restaurant has its weaknesses. Good handmade flour tortillas had no chance of saving a gummy green mess of chicharrones. There are better ways to deploy boiled nopales than as slippery strips in a giant salad dominated by iceberg lettuce. But like the original Don Memo cart, its strengths outshine its shortcomings.

What Tacos Don Memo 3.0 might look like is an open question, but there's every reason to hope Saavedra gets another chance to grow. In the meantime, University City's al pastor contingent can root for the continued popularity of his bigger, beefier neighbor Bobby Flay, this fine and for-the-moment fast pork taco goes out to you.

(t_popp@citypaper.net)

CINCO DE MAYO FIESTA!



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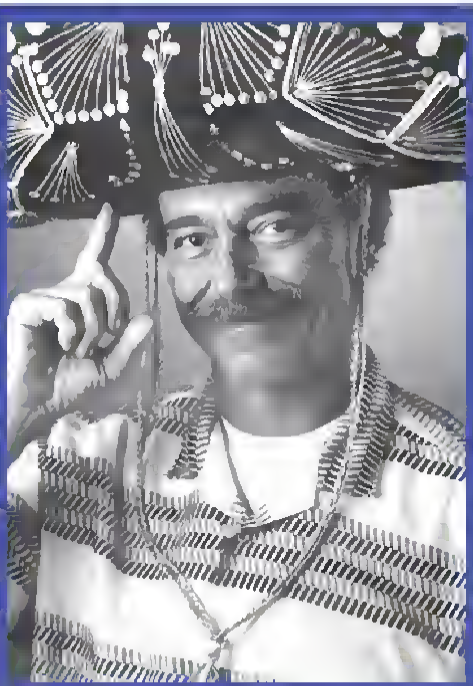

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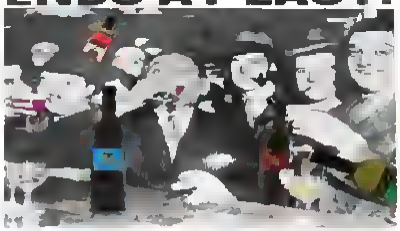

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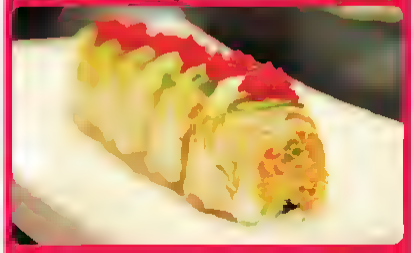

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feedingfrenzy

By Drew Lazor

PELICIA D AMBROSIO

➤ NOW SEATING

El Rey | Stephen Starr's latest restaurant draws aesthetic inspiration from the gritty Mexicali roadside bars in flicks like *From Dusk Till Dawn*. (For our safety, the servers rock natty plaid shirts and not double-cylinder revolver codpieces.) Situated in the former Midtown IV Diner, El Rey's walls are filled with trippy Mexican prison art and various kitschtastic flea-market finds. Chef Dionicio Jimenez (ex-Xochitl) has put together a largely traditional Mexican menu (leave the mod flash-in-dash to El Vez) — tortas, cemitas, tacos, moles, chiles en nogada. In the back of the restaurant sits the Ranstead Room, a covert cocktail bar (check out Spirit Sister on p. 44). *2013 Chestnut St., 215 563 3330, elreyrestaurant.com.*

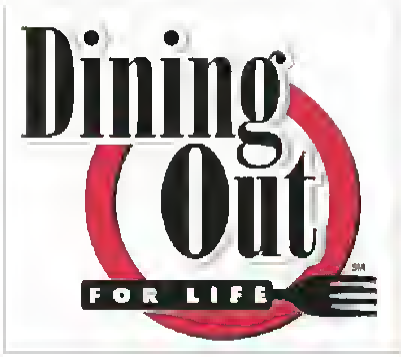
Savas Brick Oven Pizza | This combo takeout, bar and restaurant is owned by Savvas Navrosidis, proprietor of the nearby Fairmount Pizza as well as Alessandro's at Broad and Wallace. The collegiate-friendly space, which opens early as a breakfast café/coffee spot (with free WiFi) and goes till last call, offers a huge selection of brick-oven pizzas, stromboli, sandwiches and salads, plus a full bar. Don't miss Navrosidis' wife Maria's a homey Greek specialties, which include souvlaki, stuffed peppers and revithia, a vegetarian lemon broth-based soup with braised chickpeas and baby spinach. Hours: Sun.-Thu., 9 a.m.-1 a.m., Fri.-Sat., 9 a.m.-2 a.m. *3505 Lancaster Ave., 215 222-7777, savaspizza.com.*

➤ LITTLE VITTLES

Renaissance Sausage is the name of the brand-new food truck making its debut this Sunday, May 2, at **Headhouse Square Farmers Market**. It offers four varieties of sausage made from scratch using locally sourced, organic ingredients. ➤ **Munish Narula** has opened a new Tiffin location in the Wynnewood Shopping Center at 50 E. Wynnewood Road. ➤ **Kraftwork** (Girard and Montgomery), from **Sidecar**'s **Adam Ritter**, opens next Friday, May 7. ➤ **David Arrell**, owner of **Good Karma** at 331 S. 22nd St., is working on a second café at 928 Pine St. It's up for a July opening.

Got A Tip? *Please send restaurant news to drew.lazor@citypaper.net or call 215-735-8444 ext. 218.*

WHAT'S COOKING



Dining Out for Life *Thu., April 29* ➤ Nearly 200 restaurants across the Delaware Valley have signed on for the 20th annual Dining Out For Life, an evening of eating to raise money for AIDS charities. All participating eateries will contribute a third of the night's food sales to benefit six organizations. There are 100 businesses on board in the city, including six that have participated every year since the event's launch — London Grill, Mexican Post, Rembrandt's, Venture Inn, Westbury and Zocalo. A full list of restaurants can be found online. *Dining Out for Life, various locations, 877-328-4543, diningoutforlife.com/philadelphia*

IPA Fest and Block Party at Hawthornes Café *Sun., May 2, 3-7 p.m., pay as you go* ➤ It's almost the season for short-shorts and all-the-time outdoor seating! We're ready — and so is Hawthornes, which is throwing a block party centered around hoptastic Indie Pale Ales. A $4 drink ticket gets you a pint from the mammoth draft lineup, which'll feature IPAs like Russian River Pliny the Elder, Bell's Two-Hearted and Ballast Point Sculpin. Enjoy live reggae from The Sun Tones, plus burgers and dogs. (Rain date is May 16.) *Hawthornes Café, 738 S. 11th St., 215-627-3012, hawthornecafe.com.*

Philadelphia Restaurant Weekend at the Piazza *Sat.-Sun., May 1-2, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. and noon-7 p.m.* ➤ Sponsored by Bar Ferdinand and yelp.com, this weekend's Piazza festivities will feature food and drink from 50 area restaurants. Sample eats from various cuisines, participate in PYT's burger-eating contest (noon on Saturday), catch Harry Arnold from Darling's doing cooking demos and snag some fresh produce at the farmers market. *The Piazza at Schmidts, 1050 N. Hancock St., 215-467-4603, atthepiazza.com.*

Opening Day at Headhouse Farmers Market *Sun., May 2, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.* ➤ Sunday marks the start of the season at Headhouse Farmers Market, where some 30 vendors will be hawking locally grown/produced wares. Try cheeses from Talula's Table, sandwiches from new truck vendor Renaissance Sausage, bread from Wild Flour Bakery and much more. *Headhouse Farmers Market, Second and Lombard streets, 215-575-0444, thefoodtrust.org*

—Alexandra Harcharek

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By Matt Jones

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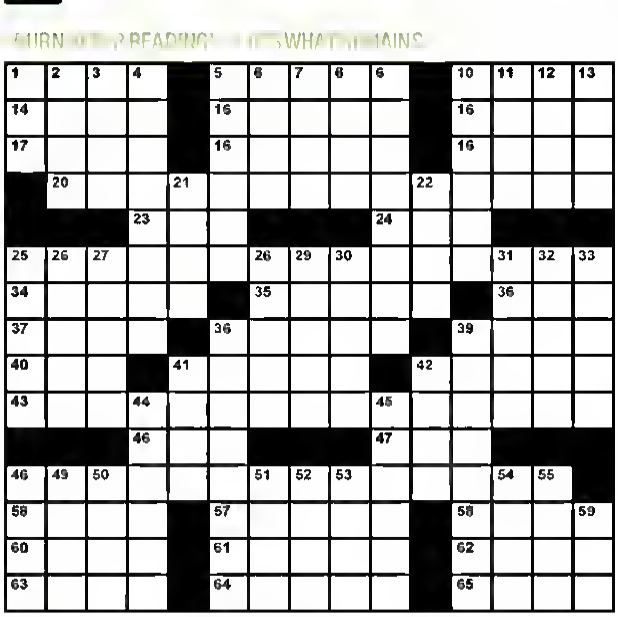
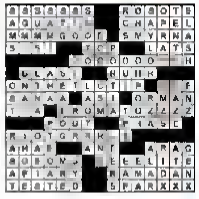


ACROSS

1 Hot spot offering
5 Author Jong
10 Like some water or lemonade
14 Milky gemstone
15 Lose it and run amok
16 Square footage, e.g.
17 Cabo ___ (Sammy Hagar tequila brand)
18 Adrenal, for instance
19 Closes a jacket
20 Loretta Swit's nickname with "The"?
23 Jimmy Eat World genre
24 Ending for spat or farm
25 Tried to buzz off of a fertilizer ingredient?
34 White from fright
35 Not quite right?
36 Rock's ___ Speedwagon
37 Health bar competitor
38 Minute Maid Park player
39 Kenya's first prime minister Kenyatta
40 ___-in "uncle"
41 "___ Up Style" (Blu Cantrell single)
42 Word before hook or opera
43 Meat-and-potatoes dish used to hone your culinary skills?
46 Off-reader of sects
47 Part of many Arab names
48 Scary creatures that can't be bought with plastic?
56 Assist a criminal
57 How taboos are with most people
58 Barney's hangout
60 Guam, for one: abbr.
61 Macbeth was one
62 Yemen neighbor
63 *Caprica* network
64 Subject that may require a permission slip
66 Win over

DOWN

1 "That's so cool!"
2 Product that debuted April 3, 2010
3 Race car driver Teo
4 It follows "And" in a Beatles title
5 It might get spiked in December
6 Part
7 Mesquite figure
8 "Please?"
9 Totals
10 Type of suit for a chemical spill
11 Operatic solo
12 Weightlifter's grunts
13 Morse code bit
21 "You won't believe the mess ___"
22 Fruit in a gin fizz
25 Fill the tank
26 Schindler of *Schindler's List*
27 Yonder objects
28 "___ la vista, baby!"
29 Large jazz combo
30 Olympic "Flying Finn" Paavo
31 Parfumerie's attraction
32 Long rides?
33 Tarzan's title film buddy
38 Ducts
39 His character was killed off after he left *Good Times*
41 Sir Topham ___ (*Thomas the Tank Engine* boss)
42 "Money Honey" Maria Bartiromo's network
44 Gear claw, for one
45 Made noises from the pen
48 Yoga class supplies
49 Follow the rules
50 Foamy toy brand
51 Architect Ludwig Mies van der ___
52 Ohio Redding record label
53 Actress Skye of *Say Anything*
54 "___ friend you are!"
55 Get better
59 Andy Samberg show, for short



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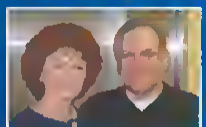

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Twe units are available new. Eech heve 2 bedrooms 1 beth Selely end conveniently located on Broad St. Units have forced air heat and central air There is e enained washer and dryer in the building Hot water is included in the rent To schedule e showing please reply by email to the ed cell 215 828 1447 or text 215 982 9081 Good luck in your search!

PRO A GIRARD AREA
Northern Liberties 2 bedroom Trinity en O Nies! 1 block from Piazza Washer/dryer dishwasher refrigerator central en gales court yard with intercom & gate release in apartment. $900 per month plus utilities. Call for appointment to see 610-544-5931

AVENUE OF THE ARTS, 1BR/1BA
1 877 848 8874 Ultra modern 1 BR/1B A. Avenue of the Arts S Central Philadelphia! Features: marble bathroom w/ Jacuzzi W/D inside unit kitchen w/ stainless steel appliances, dishwasher garbage disposal, etc central air /gas heat hardwood floors walk-out deck No drokers fees! A must see! $875+ Location: South Broad St and Dickinson St. (Avenue of the Arts at South Carolina) Call 1 877 848 8874

AVENUE OF THE ARTS, 2BR/1BA
1 877 848 8874 2BR/1 BA Avenue of the Arts S Central Philadelphia! Lots of natural light...large kitchen & living eres balcony private entrance and more! Features: wall-to-wall closets for lots of storage large kitchen w/ granite countertops marble-finished bathroom with jacuzzi tub original hardwood floors W/D inside unit, and C/A. Available now! $1200 00 + Call toll-free 1 877 848 8874

DELAWARE COUNTY
Great 1st Flat in Aldan PA. Duplex! Wall-to-wall carpet central air and heat. 2 bedrooms new kitchen, just renovated walking distance to public transportation and all street parking! $800/month+all utilities No pets. Space for washer/dryer Application fee and credit check. This apt is a must see! Call 2674815605 between 6pm-8pm for an appointment!

Studio/ Efficiency

RITTENHOUSE SQUARE
Lovely Studio in Beautiful Brownstone, Block to Rittenhouse Sq. New Kitchen HW Firs, Onsite Laundry Intercom Entry Ask About Move-in Discounts! $875/Mo. 215-735-8030 # 216850

One Bedroom

15TH/SPRUCE
Beautiful Art Deco High rise 1Bdrm Apt Desk Attendant HW Flrs Updatbe Kitch On-and Laundry, Intercom Entry Amazing Location! From $1080/Mo 215 735 8030 Ask About Move-in Discounts! Lic #219709

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Townhouse,yard W/D+$1 195 e-mail me bpnl5! @aol com

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Old City 2 BD 2 BA 2 Fireplaces Courtyard W/D AC 1 person $1 450 2 people $1650 call 267-319-4453

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2 Bdrm Spacious Bi-level with 1 & bath hardwood floors C/A, W/D beamed ceilings exposed brick Large living room with fireplace Big eat-in-kitchen opens onto a patio 2 equally large bdrms w/ big closets and separated by the bathroom and staircase Pet friendly Available June or July
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2 bedroom duplex utilities paid patio big kitchen pets ok $650 LOCATORS INC 215-922-3400

UNIVERSITY CITY
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Three+ Bedrooms

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BELLA VISTA
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BREWERYTOWN
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SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA
3 bedroom lease purchase! No credit check! Garage $750 LOCATORS INC 215-922-3400

SOUTHWEST PHILADELPHIA
Lease purchase! No credit check! 3 bedroom garage $750 LOCATORS 215 922 3400

WEST OAK LANE VCT
3 bedroom 2 bath patio walk in closet pets ok $800 LOCATORS 215-922-3400

ZOO AREA
3 bedroom 2 story house Fee paid! Patio, yard, washer/dryer $800 LOCATORS INC 215-922-3400

ZOO AREA
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LOWER KENSINGTON
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MANAYUNK
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MANAYUNK
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MT AIRY
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NORTH PHILADELPHIA
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PENNS LANDING VCT
7 rooms 2 baths 2 story Fee paid! Basement pets $1100 LOCATORS INC 215-922-3400

PENNS LANDING VCT
Fee paid! 7 room 2 baths 2 story basement pets ok $1100 LOCATORS INC 215 922 3400

PORT RICHMOND VCT
4 bedroom 2 story No credit check! Yard $775 LOCATORS INC 215-922 3400

SOUTH PHILADELPHIA ROWE
Corner property Front and rear entrance Finished basement with large eat in kitchen powder room and family room area Fenced in side yard Great neighborhood! Right off of Broad Street Close to public transportation and all major highways and bridges Walking distance to sports complex! Across from beautiful Marconi Park. $1500/month+utilities Contact Stephanie 267 888-8478

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83 S. LANSDOWNE AVE- 2BD, 2BA, H/W. Include, heat hot water cooking gas, Laundry- $950.00

88 E. BALTIMORE PIKE-1BD,1BA, H/W. New Kitchen laundry. Included heat, hot water & cooking gas-$725.00

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41S E. CHURCH ROAD- 2BD, 1BA, Naw Kitchen. H/W. Laundry, Included heat, hot water- $975.00

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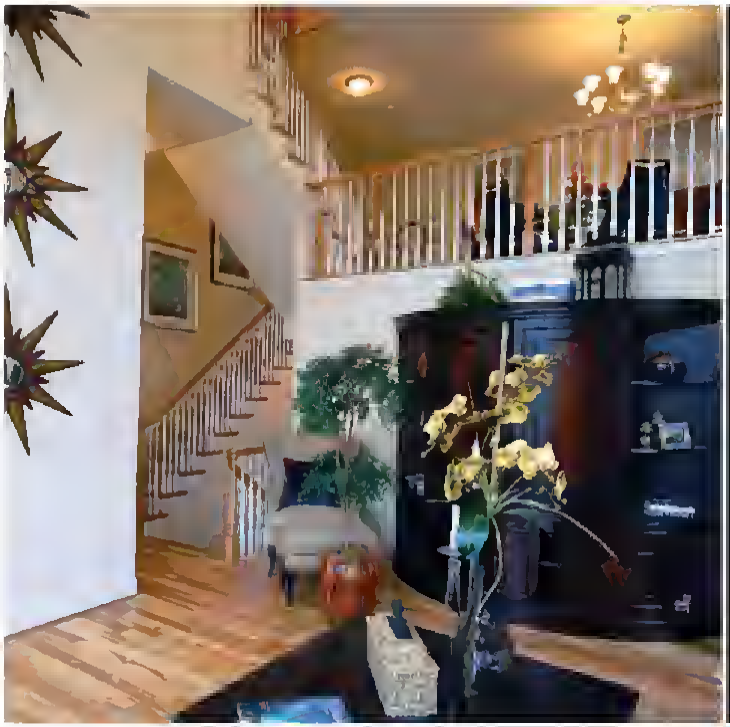

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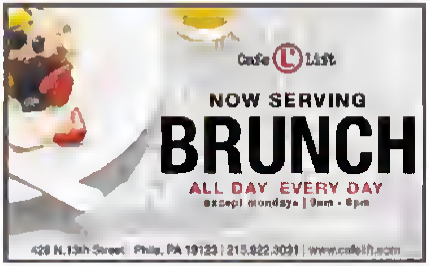

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